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Consultation on the future of primary provision in Knocknagor Primary School Pre-publication Consultation – Start Date 08 October 2026



Aims of the Presentation



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- The Trillick and Irvinestown area is included in the Education Authority's (EA) 2024-26 Area Planning Operational Plan 2. The requirement is to address primary pupils being taught in composite classes of more than two year groups; increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways and maximise resources and sustainability
- The aim of this presentation is to:
 1. provide an overview of the Sustainable Schools Policy;
 2. provide an overview of current provision in the area within the context of this policy;
 3. outline CCMS' proposal for future provision; and
 4. provide stakeholders with sufficient information to comment on the proposal.



Agenda

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1. Context
2. Options
3. The Proposal
4. Next Steps





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Section 1 - Context



Sustainable Schools Policy



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The Sustainable Schools Policy (2009) established 6 criteria for considering the sustainability of schools.

- Quality educational experience
- Stable enrolment trends
- Sound financial position
- Strong leadership and management
- Accessibility
- Strong links with the community





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Quality Educational Experience - Challenges Faced by Smaller Schools

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“Teachers in small schools face problems of having less scope for professional interaction and mutual support. The school is unlikely to provide a wide programme of extra-curricular activities and will have a smaller range of teacher specialisms e.g. music.

The smaller numbers of children in each year group limit the opportunities for working alongside peers, social interaction and challenge, and participation in extra-curricular activities including team-based experiences.”

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

“When the composite class spans more than two year groups, ensuring adequate progression in learning and planning to meet individual needs across a wider range of abilities and stages of development can be more challenging for the teacher. It may also limit opportunities for the children to develop socially and emotionally with those of a similar age and stage.”

ETI Chief Inspector’s Report 2014 - 2016



Quality Educational Experience

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The Sustainable Schools Policy identifies a number of indicators in regard to enrolment at primary schools.

- No more than two composite year groups in a single classroom at primary level.





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Quality Educational Experience

Knocknagor PS (Source: Knocknagor PS)

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Classroom	Year Group	Number of Pupils
Classroom 1	1	7
	2	4
Classroom 2	3	4
	4	11
Classroom 3	5	9
	6	9
	7	8



Quality Educational Experience – Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) Inspection Report

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In November 2017, ETI carried out an inspection in Knocknagor PS. It assessed the outcomes for learners as very good and the quality of provision as very good.^[1]

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

^[1] Knocknagor Primary School, Trillick, County Tyrone, Report of an Inspection in November 2017



Stable Enrolment Trend



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The Sustainable Schools Policy notes the following in regards to enrolment at primary schools.

- Ideally a primary school should have at least seven classrooms (one for each year group).
- The minimum (not optimal) enrolment for newly established schools or existing schools should be **140** in urban areas and **105** in rural areas.





Stable Enrolment Trend

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Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total*
2015/16	11	10	11	8	11	8	6	65
2016/17	8	11	11	11	8	11	8	68
2017/18	8	8	11	11	11	9	11	69
2018/19	6	9	6	10	10	12	12	65
2019/20	6	7	8	7	10	10	12	60
2020/21	5	5	8	8	6	10	10	52
2021/22	9	5	5	6	8	6	10	49
2022/23	8	8	5	4	6	8	6	45
2023/24	10	9	8	5	3	5	9	49
2024/25	3	9	9	8	5	3	5	42
2025/26	4	4	10	10	9	6	3	46
2026/27**	7	4	4	11	9	9	8	52

*The enrolment figures includes pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs. **confirmed by the school



Stable Enrolment Trend

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Knocknagor PS has had admissions into Y1 between three and ten pupils each year within the past five years.

There is no evidence, based on past enrolments, or future predicted enrolments, to suggest the school can meet the requirement of the Sustainable Schools Policy of **105** pupils, if the status quo remains.





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Demographics

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The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) predicts a population decrease of pupils in Year 1 to 7, within the Fermanagh and Omagh (LGD), of 9.7% (-1,031) between 2024 and 2035.

Operational Plan 2: 2024-26 Primary, Special and Post Primary Schools (including Specialist Provision)



Sound Financial Position



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The Sustainable Schools Policy notes the following in relation to school finances.

- The school's annual finances should indicate that it can live within its delegated budget.
- The school's financial trends should indicate that it will continue to be able to live within its annually delegated budget.
- The school's three year financial plan, based upon realistic assumptions, should indicate that where there is a deficit, this can be substantially reduced or recovered.



Sound Financial Position

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The school's budget is determined by a range of factors, including.

The number of pupils.

The size of the school building.

Principal release funding.

Small school support.



Financial Position 2026-2029

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	2026 - 27	2027 - 28	2028- 29
Anticipated Enrolment	46	50	50
Planned Teaching Complement	3.4	3.4	3.4
Total Budget (£)	278,705	292,897	292,897
Opening Cumulative Surplus/deficit (£)	- 100,337	- 167,242	- 226,597
Total Expenditure (£)	345,610	352,253	359,758
In Year Surplus/Deficit (£)	-66,905	-59,356	-66,860
Closing Balance (£)	-167,242	-226,597	-293,458
Pupil/Teacher ratio	13.5	14.7	14.7

These figures are from the school's 3 Year Financial Plan.



Financial Position

EA's policy is that schools should not have a surplus/deficit in excess of 5% or £75,000, whichever is the lesser, of their delegated budget.

Based on the status quo, Knocknagor PS will not be able to operate within the recommended parameter of $\pm 5\%$ of the allocated budget, as required.





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Leadership and Management

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The Sustainable Schools Policy notes the need for strong leadership and effective management.

The Report of an Inspection in November 2017 noted the quality of leadership and management was very good.



Accessibility



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The Sustainable Schools Policy
notes:

home to school transport travel times of
less than 30 minutes for primary pupils
(i.e. 1 hour per day in total).



The school is accessible to pupils who live in the local area.



Strong Links with the Community

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The Sustainable Schools Policy highlights the importance of the degree of parental involvement in the school, the number of children in the vicinity attending the school, and the contribution of the school to the community.

Knocknagor PS highlighted the contribution they make to the community in the consultation document.





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Section 2 – Options



CCMS has identified and assessed a series of options which include.

Option 1 – Maintain the status quo.

Option 2 – Shared/Integrated options.

Option 3 – Amalgamation.

Option 4 – Closure of Knocknagor PS

The following slides provide commentary on each option.



Option 1 – Maintain the Status Quo

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Knocknagor PS is retained.

- Parental preference for the school is maintained.

The school continues to face the following challenges of:

- more than 2 year groups being taught together in a single classroom in the area;
- Educational and financial challenges;
- less than 4 teachers in the school;
- creating opportunities for staff development in smaller schools; and
- low enrolment below the Sustainable Schools Policy threshold of **105**.



Option 2 – Shared/Integrated Options

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There are a number of shared options that are used by schools.

- “Shared education” provision is where schools, from different sectors, secure resources to carry out shared activities/classes.
- A “Shared campus” model is where schools agree to locate on the one site in order to maximise resources and facilitate closer working together. The shared campus model requires schools to be able to address the challenges of the Sustainable Schools Policy (2009).
- A ‘joint faith’ model is where a school is established by two or more faith groups.
- Integrated Education brings children and staff from Catholic and Protestant traditions, as well as those of other beliefs (and no beliefs), cultures and communities together in one school.

It is challenging to see how these options could address the long term sustainability issues facing school provision in the area.



Option 3 – Amalgamation

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The term amalgamation is described in the Sustainable Schools Policy Section 6.13 that a new school is formed to replace 2 or more schools of similar size coming together and usually means a new name, uniform, etc.

- An amalgamation is achieved by the closure/discontinuance of 2 or more schools. The new school is a coming together of the two or more schools that have been closed.
- There is a significant difference in the enrolment numbers in the other schools.
- This option has the potential to unsettle a larger school community and staff.
- Department of Education guidance indicates schools involved in an amalgamation should be of similar size.





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Option 4 – Closure of Knocknagor PS

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Knocknagor PS is closed

- Parental preference for those choosing Knocknagor PS is not maintained

- long term sustainability for provision for all pupils in the area.
- access to a broad and balanced curriculum within schools with at least 4 classes in a more sustainable school.
- management of financial pressures with increased numbers in nearby schools.
- Increased capacity in nearby schools to withstand fluctuations in enrolment numbers.
- the parish school being located in the village.



EQUALITY/RURAL NEEDS ACT

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CCMS has a duty to screen all policies, procedures and proposals to assess their impact on and give due regard to any matters relating to:

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;

the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016; and

The responses from this stakeholder consultation will be considered prior to the completion of the final screening process.





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Section 3 – The Proposal



Recommended Option: - Option 4

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Having given due consideration to the issues and options, CCMS is proposing, in line with the requirements of the Sustainable Schools Policy, discontinue Knocknagor Primary School 31 August 2028 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Should a consultee submit an alternative proposal which meets the Sustainable Schools Policy criteria, this will be considered in the consultation.

If this proposal was approved, pupils would have the ability to move to an alternative suitable school. CCMS would support the school through the closure procedure to ensure the pastoral and educational needs of pupils are met.



Alternative Provision

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Alternative provision is any school of the parents'/carers' choice, subject to there being spaces and accommodation available.

In the event of a Development Proposal (DP) being approved, transport assistance will be provided to a suitable school of the parents'/guardians' choice if there is no suitable school within two miles from their home. [EA's Transport Policy].

The following table illustrates there is capacity in nearby schools to accommodate pupils from the school. If required, schools can make an application for a temporary variation to their enrolment number to accept pupils from a closing school.





Alternative Provision

.com

To	Type	Distance (miles)	Approved enrolment	Actual enrolment	Statemented pupils	Available places*
St Scire's primary School	Maintained	4.6	143	132	9	20
Irvinestown Primary School	Controlled	4.3	182	185	10	7
St Paul's Primary School, Irvinestown	Maintained	4.3	315	195	24	144
Queen Elizabeth 2 Primary School	Controlled	4.1	61	29	0	32

Source: DE Statistics 2025/26

* The enrolment figure includes supernumerary pupils (which are pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs).





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Section 4 – Next Steps



Roles and Responsibilities



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CCMS - reviews the consultation responses and if agreed by CCMS' Education Provision Committee, submits a Development Proposal (DP) to the EA.

Education Authority (EA) - issues the proposal to affected schools and publishes the proposal to commence a two month statutory objection period.

Department of Education (DE) - after this is completed, the DE compiles and assesses all the relevant information before making a recommendation to the Minister, who considers the information and the DE's recommendation before making the final decision.

As this consultation phase of the process is the responsibility of CCMS, DE would not comment on the proposal at this time.



How to Respond to the Consultation

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CCMS is seeking your views on the proposal discontinue Knocknagor Primary School 31 August 2028 or as soon as possible thereafter. CCMS would encourage you to respond by **20 November 2026** using the online version of the Pre-Publication Consultation questionnaire via:

- [Knocknagor Consultation Response](#)

The link to this is on the website along with the other consultation documents.

- **Or alternatively by e-mail:**

knocknagorconsultation@ccmsschools.com

Please indicate in your response if you are a:

- - Parent/Guardian/carer of a pupil at one of the schools;
- - Member of the Board of Governors
- - Member of staff.

The pupils' views will also be considered as part of the consultation process.

All responses to be returned by 20 November 2026

