

## COPY OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

### Cover Note

<b>DP No.</b>	DP 454
<b>School</b>	Gaelscoil na Daróige (204-6687)
<b>Proposal</b>	The establishment of a part-time statutory IM nursery unit, with 26 part-time places, at Gaelscoil na Daróige with effect from 1 September 2016, or as soon as possible thereafter.
<b>Minister's Decision</b>	Not Approved
<b>Date of Decision</b>	09/08/2016
<b>Minister's Comments</b>	Agree not to approve DP454, taking into account all advice of officials, submissions by the various bodies and thereafter reflecting on Article 89 duty. I don't believe that it would be a sustainable proposal in the long run
<b>Additional Notes</b>	n/a
<b>Information Redacted</b>	Some information and personal data may have been removed in line with the principles of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act.
	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

**DATE:** 15 July 2016

**To:** PETER WEIR MLA see copy distribution list below  
Minister for Education

**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL (DP) NO. 454 – PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A STATUTORY PART-TIME IRISH-MEDIUM (IM) NURSERY UNIT AT GAELSCOIL NA DARÓIGE**

<b>Issue:</b>	To decide on the following proposal;  DP 454 – The establishment of a part-time statutory IM nursery unit, with 26 part-time places, at Gaelscoil na Daróige with effect from 1 September 2016, or as soon as possible thereafter.
<b>Timescale:</b>	Urgent –the proposed implementation date of the proposal is 1 September 2016 however this is likely to be unachievable.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	Approval of the DP would require the employment of a new nursery teacher and assistant, at a cost of approximately £30,000 which will be funded from within the school’s budget.  Should the proposed statutory provision be established, funding would transfer to the Aggregated Schools Budget. As such, the cost of the nursery class for 26 part-time nursery places would be £46,708.
<b>FOI Implications:</b>	The content of this submission is likely to be fully disclosable.
<b>Statutory Duties Implications</b>	Article 89 of the Education (NI) Order 1998 <i>to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish- medium education.</i>
<b>Presentational Issues:</b>	It is likely that there will be local media interest in your decision. The Communications Team (CT) can draw from this submission, if required. (Cleared with CT).
<b>Recommendation:</b>	It is recommended that you:  i. Do not approve DP 454, proposing a statutory part-time IM nursery unit, with 26 part-time places, be established at Gaelscoil na Daróige with effect from 1 September 2016, or as soon as possible thereafter.  ii. Agree that this submission (with appropriate redactions) can be made available on the Department’s

	<p><b>website once the school and the Education Authority have been notified and a press release issued.</b></p> <p><b>iii. Note that officials are available to discuss the submission should you wish.</b></p>
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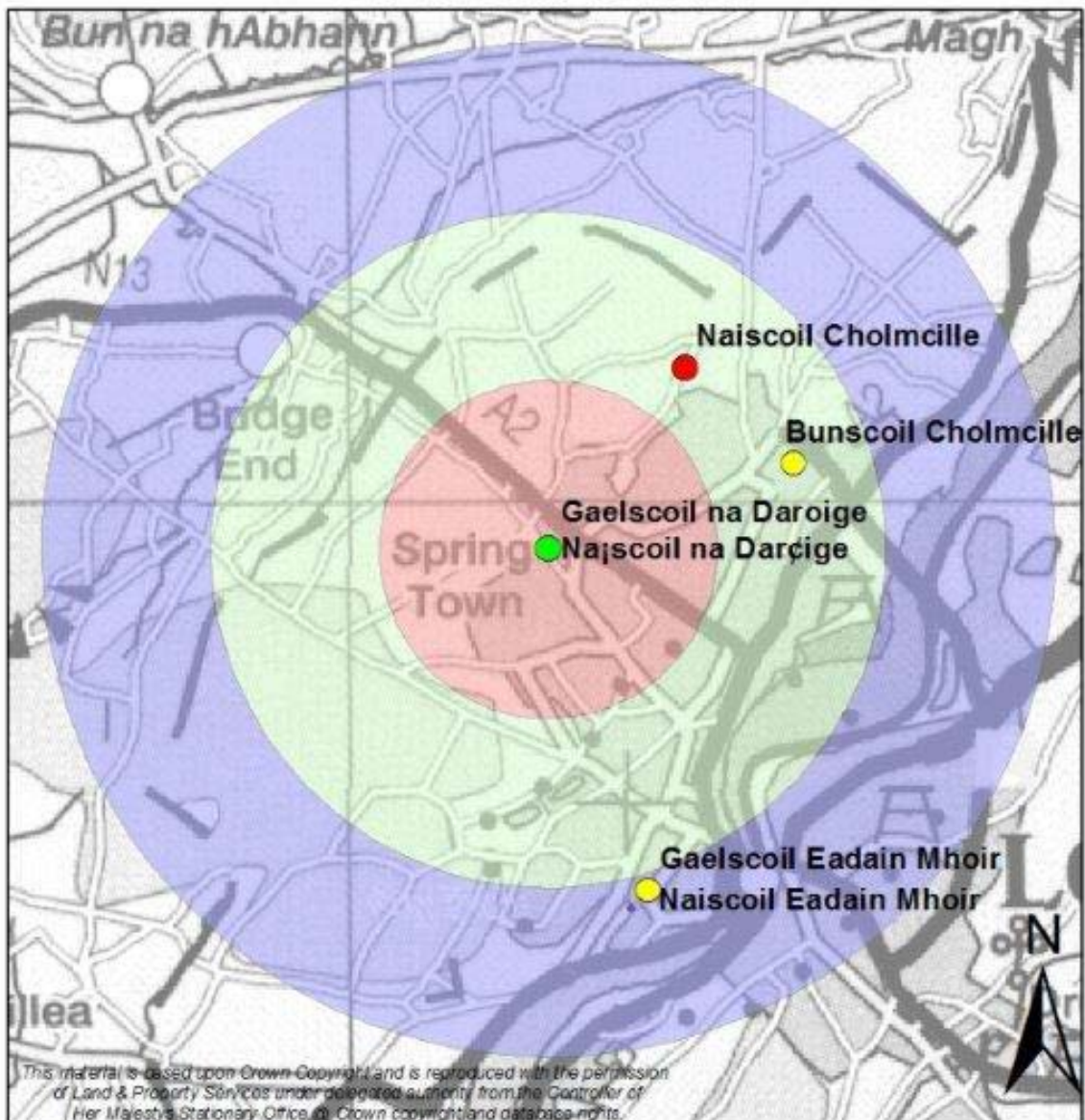
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## **Appendices**

<b>Appendix A:</b>	<b>Contextual information on current policy and processes for planning pre-school provision and the Development Proposal process</b>
<b>Appendix B:</b>	<b>Copy of Published DP 454</b>
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<b>Appendix G:</b>	<b>DE Comments and statistics</b>
<b>Appendix H:</b>	<b>ETI Comments</b>

**Map 1 – Alternative IM Primary and IM pre-school provision**

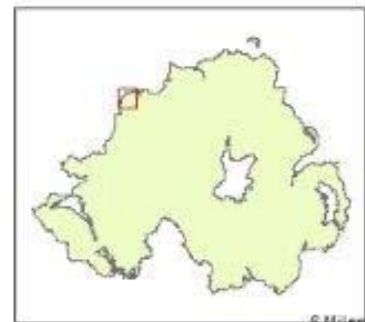
**Naiscoil na Daroige - Irish Medium Primary & Pre-School Provision**



- Naiscoil na Daroige
- Irish Medium Primary Schools
- Naiscoil Cholmcille

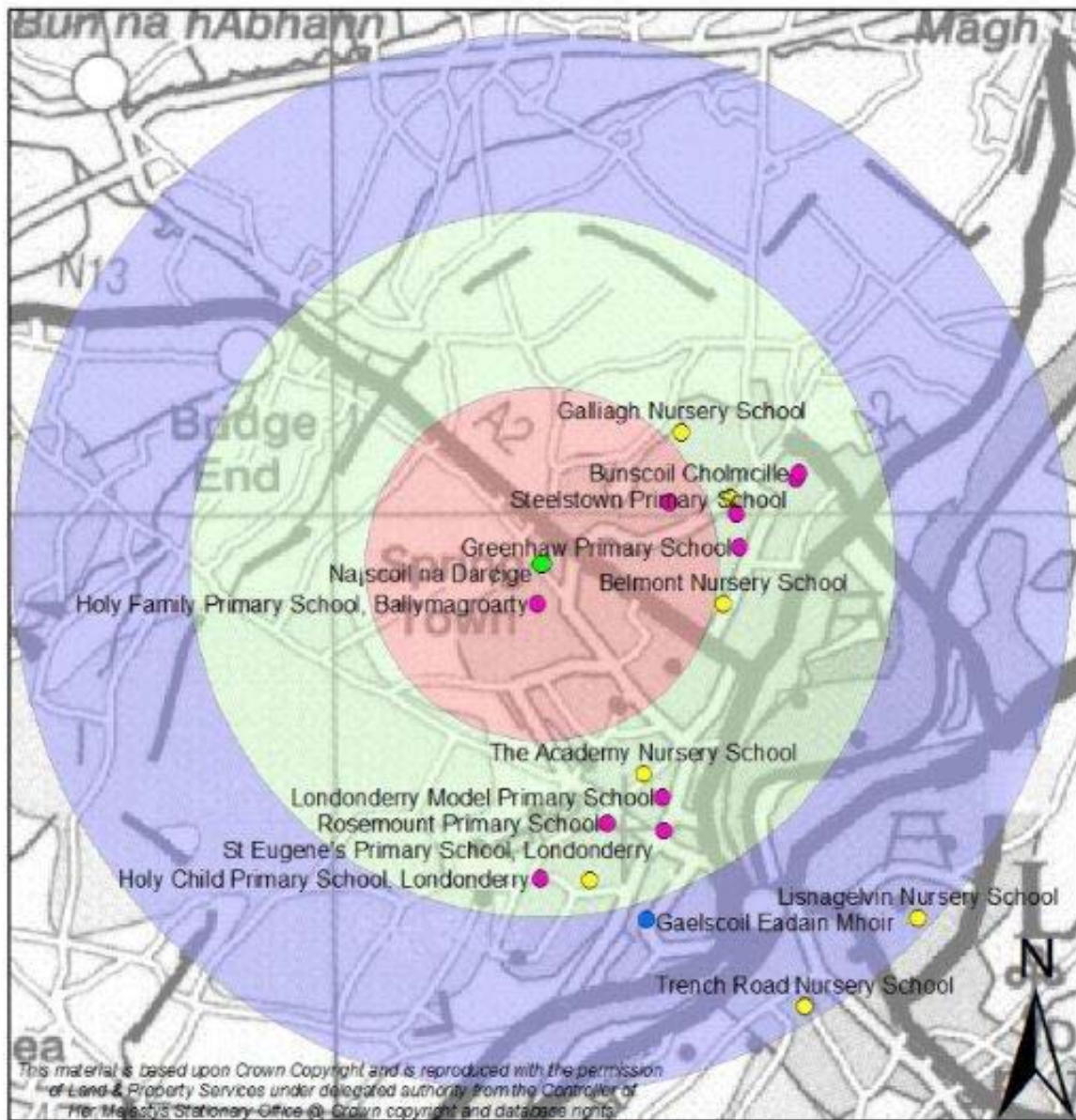
**3 mile Buffer Naiscoil na Daroige**

Buffer Distance
1.00
2.00
3.00



**Map 2 – Alternative Nursery schools and Nursery**

**Naiscoil na Daroige - with Nursery Schools & Nursery Units**

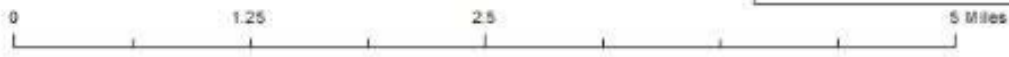
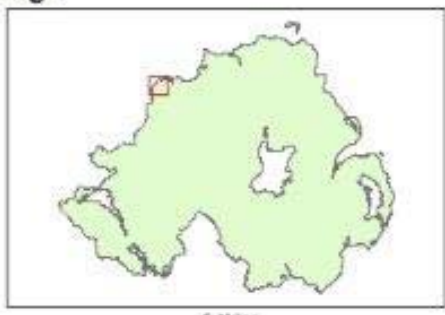


- Naiscoil na Daroige
- Nursery school provision
- Nursery units IM provision
- Nursery Units

**3 mile Buffer Naiscoil na Daroige**

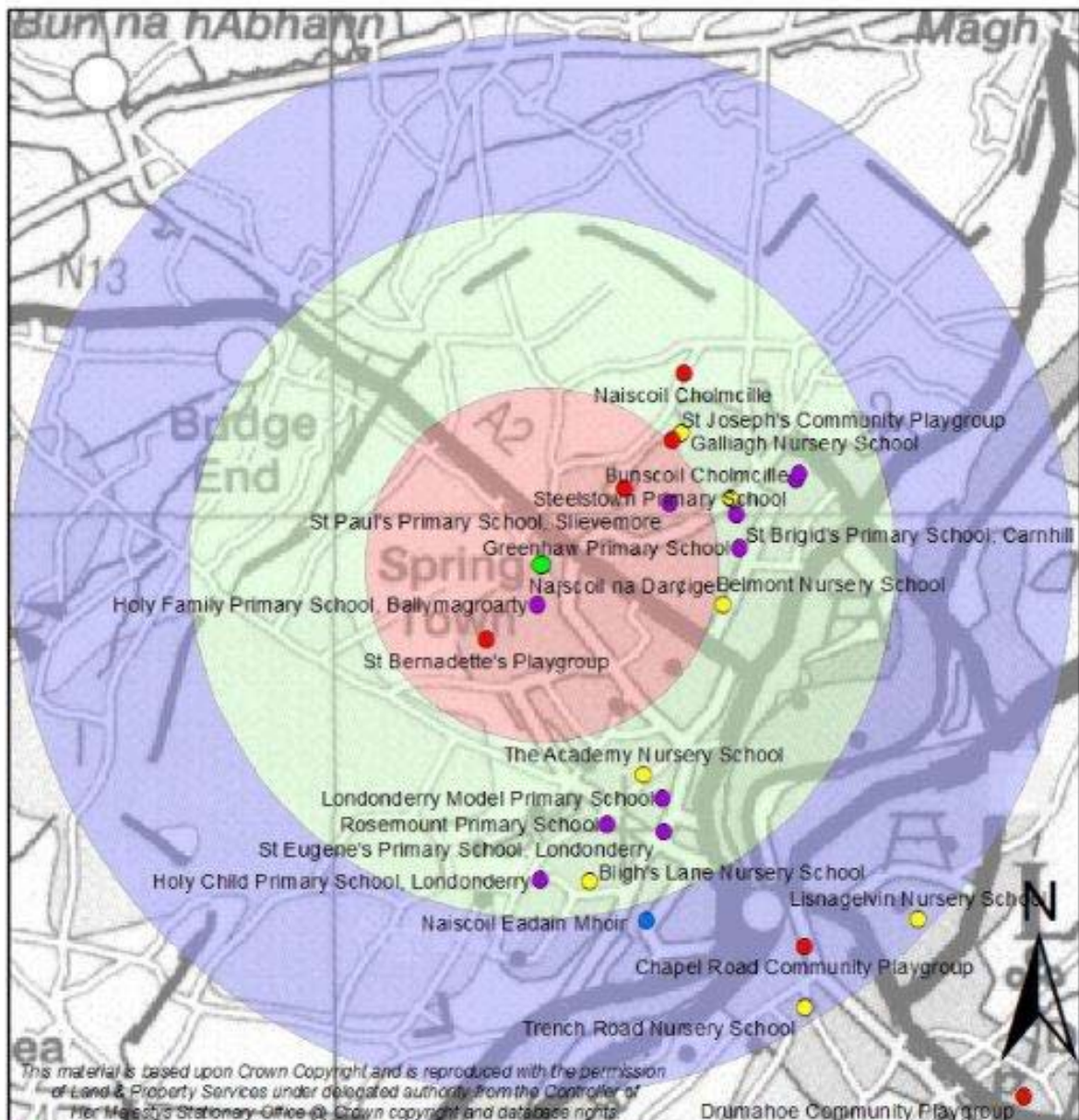
**Buffer Distance**

	1.00
	2.00
	3.00

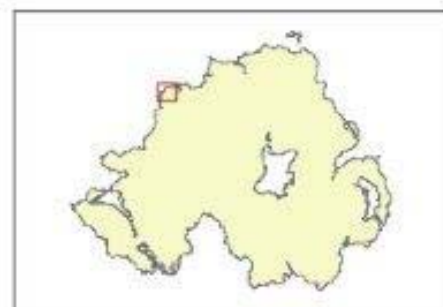


**Map 3 – Alternative Nursery schools/units and Playgroups**

**Naiscoil na Daroige - with Nursery Schools, Nursery Units & Playgroups**

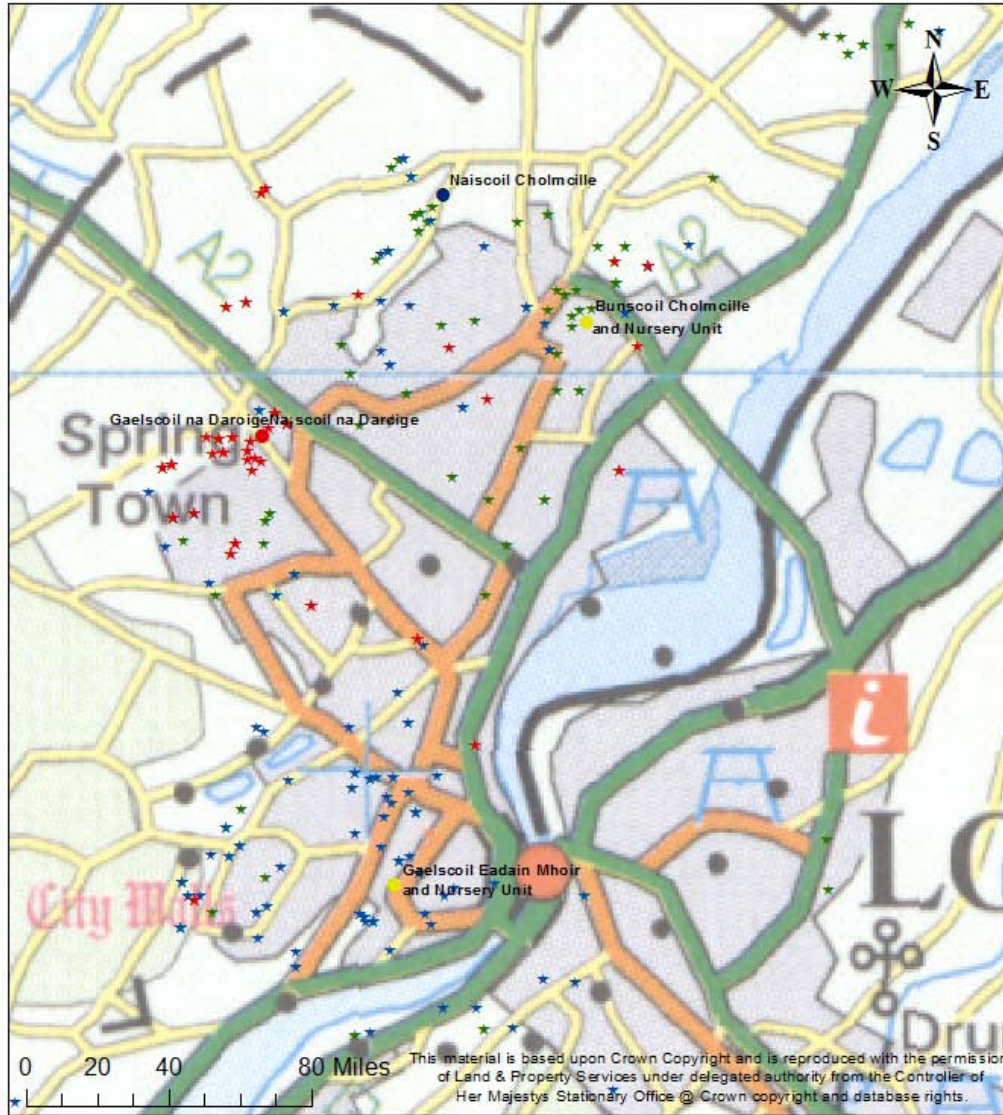


- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="color: green;">●</span> Naiscoil na Daroige       | <b>3 mile Buffer Naiscoil na Daroige</b>  |
| <span style="color: red;">●</span> Pre school provision        | <b>Buffer Distance</b>  |
| <span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Nursery school provision | <span style="background-color: #f08080; width: 20px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> 1.00 |
| <span style="color: blue;">●</span> Nursery units IM provision | <span style="background-color: #90ee90; width: 20px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> 2.00 |
| <span style="color: purple;">●</span> Nursery Units            | <span style="background-color: #add8e6; width: 20px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> 3.00 |



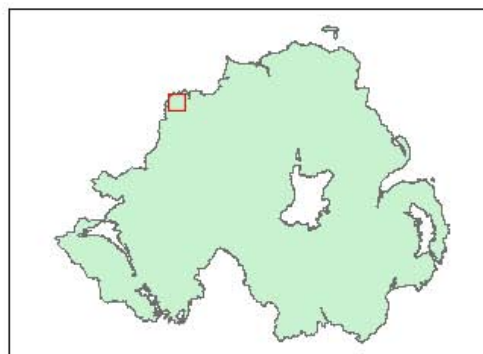
**Map 4 – Gaelscoil na Daróige and Other IM Primary and Nursery Pupils**

**Gaelscoil na Daroige & Other Irish Medium Primary & Nursery Pupils**



Key

- Gaelscoil na Daroige
- ★ Gaelscoil na Daroige Pupil Location
- ★ Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir Pupil Location
- ★ Bunscoil Cholmáille Pupil Location
- Pre-schools
- Irish Medium Primary Schools





## INTRODUCTION

1. A Development Proposal (DP) is the statutory mechanism to bring about a change to a school, including the establishment of a nursery unit. Appendix A provides detailed background information on the policy to date, processes for planning Irish-medium (IM) pre-school provision in line with the duty to encourage and facilitate the development of IM education and the Development Proposal process which will set the context for your consideration of this proposal.
2. On 16 February 2016 the Education Authority (EA) published DP 454, on behalf of the Board of Governors (BoG) of Gaelscoil na Daróige. The proposal is to establish a statutory part-time IM nursery unit, with 26 part-time places at Gaelscoil na Daróige with effect from 1 September 2016, or as soon as possible thereafter.
3. The statutory two-month objection period for this proposal commenced on the date of publication and ended on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Copies of the published DP and the proposer's 'Case for Change' are attached at Appendix B and C respectively.
4. The Case for Change proposes the establishment of a new statutory nursery unit with 26 part-time places in the premises currently occupied by Naíscoil na Daróige.

## BACKGROUND

### Naíscoil

5. Naíscoil na Daróige is a non-statutory playgroup located on the same site as Gaelscoil na Daróige. It was established in 2003 and has 12 Pre-school Education Advisory Group (PEAG) funded places in 2015/16 as shown in Table 1 below.

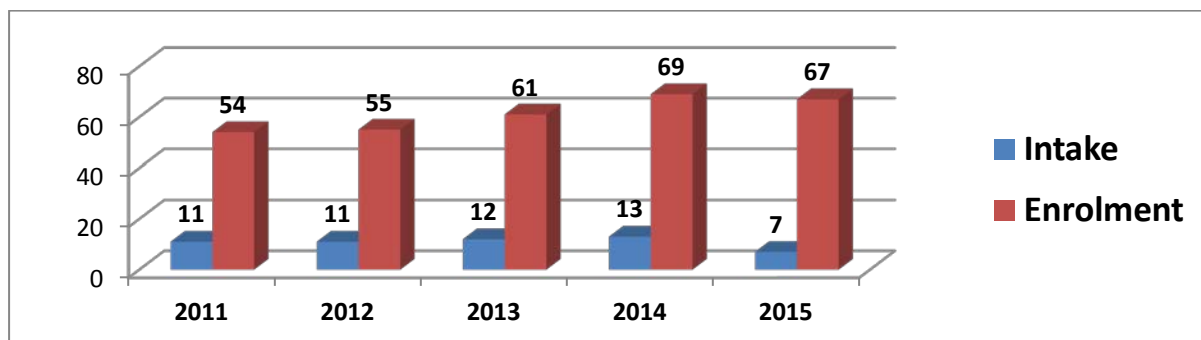
**Table 1: Naíscoil na Daróige Pre-school enrolments**

2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall
16	17	13	21	13	13	17	17	12	12

### Gaelscoil

6. Gaelscoil na Daróige began as an independent school in 2005 and was awarded grant-aided status in 2009.
7. Historical intakes and enrolments for the school are set out in the graph below. For the 2015-16 year, the school has an approved enrolment of 81 pupils and an actual enrolment of 67. This is significantly below the Sustainable Schools Policy threshold of 140 for an urban primary school. The approved admissions number is 15 pupils and for 2015-16 the school had an actual admission of 7 children. The school has received 11 P1 applications for September 2016.

**Table 2: Gaelscoil na Daróige - Historical Intakes and Enrolments**



### Area

8. On the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010 the Springtown 1 area (in which Gaelscoil na Daróige is situated) is placed 123 out of 890 (1 being most deprived and 890 being least deprived). In 2015-16 50.7% of the school's pupils were entitled to Free School Meals.

9. The NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) local birth rates and population predictions provide information on potential future population trends in the area. Birth statistics indicate a slight increase of 1% children in the pre-school cohort between September 2016 and September 2018 admissions (1,393 for 2016; 1,407 for 2018). Population projections for 3 year olds for the Derry council area predict a steady decrease of 148 (9.6%) children from 1,547 to 1,399 between 2017 and 2027. (Note: These figures are not an exact predictor of demand of the future pre-school population and do not fully take into account population migration and other factors.)

### IM Pre-school Provision

10. Map 1 above provides details of the four local IM pre-school providers in the area – these are also detailed in Table 3 below:

**Table 3: IM Pre-school Provision**

Type of Pre-school Provision	School	2015/16 Places
Statutory Nursery Unit	Bunscoil Cholmcille	26 F/T Places
	Gaelsoil Eadain Mhoir	26 F/T Places
Non-statutory Pre-school	Naiscoil na Daróige	12 Funded
	Naiscoil Cholmcille	8 Funded

11. Both Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir IM Primary schools have statutory nursery units offering 26 full-time places. Naisoil Cholmcille is an IM non-statutory playgroup. In 2015/16 13 pupils were enrolled at this school but only eight places were funded through the PEAG.

## IM Primary Provision

12. Grant-aided IM primary schools can have one of three management types. Most IM primary schools are 'other maintained' but there are also controlled and maintained IM schools. Of the two alternative IM primary schools in this area, Bunscoil Cholmcille is a Catholic maintained school with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as its managing authority while Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir is similar to Gaelscoil na Daróige in that it is an other maintained school. The table below details their historical enrolments and the evidence indicates that both schools are also significantly under the enrolment threshold of 140 for an urban primary school. Enrolments at Bunscoil Cholmcille have been declining steadily.

**Table 4: Historical Enrolments in Alternative IM Primary Schools**

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Bunscoil Cholmcille (203-6574)	100	97	91	88	83
Gaelsoil Eadain Mhoir (204-6646)	120	113	113	110	112
<i>SSP Enrolment Thresholds</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>14-</i>

13. Map 2 above shows all statutory nursery school and unit provision and Map 3 shows all statutory and non-statutory pre-school provision in the area.

### Temporary Flexibility

14. There have been a number of Temporary Flexibility requests approved for this area in the last two years. Within a two mile radius, one additional place was approved in 2014/15, and 29 in 2015/16. Within the five mile radius, five additional places were approved in 2014/15 and 41 in 2015/16. No IM pre-school providers in the area made a request for Temporary Flexibility in either of the last two years as none were oversubscribed.

### Level of Need for Pre-school Provision

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

16. The numbers of pre-school places and associated percentages are measured against the year one enrolments for 2014/15 and 2015/16. In both the two and five

mile radii of Gaelscoil na Daróige, the levels of IM pre-school provision is significantly above the planning figure of 95%.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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

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

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

19. The Department has and continues to respond to parental demand for IM education and funds IM schools that are robust and do not involve unreasonable public expenditure.

### **Early Years**

20. The policy position to date is set out in *Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning*, published on 7 October 2013. Among its key actions is placing a moratorium on any new or additional full-time provision or conversion from part-time to full-time (defined as over 4.5 hours) in advance of a review of the current levels of full-time provision, existing research and the needs of children being served by it.

21. In light of the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate IM Education (IME) and in recognition of the benefits of an immersion experience at pre-school for those pupils wishing to access IM primary provision, the Department considers the need for IM pre-school provision in the context of Recommendation 2 of the IM Review (2009): that IM providers with sufficient children should be allowed to enter the existing funding programme, even where unfilled English-medium provision is available in the area.

22. It is the Department's practice not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. This includes not ceasing funding for an existing Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) funded playgroup and establishing statutory nursery provision as an alternative.

## CASE FOR CHANGE

23. The Case for Change for this proposal is included in full at Appendix C. It states that the proposal is to provide parents and their children with the optimum start to their education and sets out the following rationale for the proposal:

- The DP is in line with the Early Years (0-6) strategy proposals which aim to:
  - (i) Improve access to IM pre-school provision; and
  - (ii) Maintain part-time provision with the statutory pre-school sector
- The Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-15 included a commitment to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.
- It goes on to state that this DP also falls in line with;
  - (i) recommendation no.2 from the Review of IM Education Report (2008);
  - (ii) obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages; and
  - (iii) the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate IM Education (Article 89 Education NI Order 1998).
- The Case for Change states that statutory provision would provide many added benefits that the voluntary provision could not.
- The most tangible benefit is the employment of a qualified teacher which will result in higher quality provision for the pupils and improve the ability of the provision to identify and cater for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- It also states that Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) advises that parents should send their children to a nursery setting for two years (the equivalent of one year full-time) to give them the best opportunity for linguistic development.
- Due to the relocation of Gaelscoil na Daróige and the symbiotic relationship between it and the naiscoil, the change in status would make it an integral part of the Gaelscoil and this in turn would facilitate any potential relocation as it would be managed by the Board of Governors, enabling the school to become a sustainable and vibrant entity.
- Should the proposal be accepted, the greater link between the schools will result in an even greater enrolment. This will not only enable the school to

reach the urban enrolment threshold but to surpass it and continue to develop and grow.

- Gaelscoil na Daróige is one of three IME providers in the city – with each school serving different areas of the city with substantial residential areas. Both alternative IM providers have statutory nursery classes and this change of status would therefore not impact on them.
- The long-term benefits would be recognised across three levels of provision. The improved nursery provision will increase the enrolment in Gaelscoil na Daróige and the strength of the primary provision would be contributing to the circumstances for the development of post-primary IME provision in the city.
- The delivery of the curriculum would cease to be delivered in the manner it has been to date – on a limited and curtailed basis but it would enable staff to deliver it in the holistic manner it was intended.
- The Case for Change states that this DP is not linked with any other DP.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Pre-publication Consultation**

24. The EA has provided evidence of consultation with Boards of Governors and Trustees, staff and parents of pupils from schools likely to be affected by the proposal. The EA received three responses, one of which was supportive of the proposal and two of which objected to the proposal.

### **Two Month Objection Period**

25. The EA published DP No 454 on 16 February 2016, and the 2-month statutory objection period ended on 18 April 2016, during which time anyone interested or affected by the proposal could write directly to the Department.

26. The Department received one letter of objection and 10 letters of support for the proposal. A summary of the key points arising from this correspondence is available at Appendix D.

### **Education Authority (EA) Comments**

27. The EA considered the current provision within the Londonderry City area and noted that, at the present time, the numbers seeking IM pre-school provision is in excess of the number of pupils entering Year 1 IM Primary Schools in the area. The Western Area PEAG indicated that the numbers currently enrolled in the non-statutory pre-school provision would not provide for conversion to a feasible 26 part-

time place Statutory Nursery. The Full EA commentary can be accessed at Appendix E.

### **Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) Comments**

28. CnaG wrote to the Department on 28 April 2016 to highlight its support for the proposal but this was received outside the statutory two month objection period. However, as the response from CnaG was commissioned by the Department, despite this not being normal practice, it is included in full in Appendix F.

### **Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) Comments**

29. The ETI does not support the DP because of the potential displacement of a good quality voluntary pre-school setting and there is uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the proposed nursery unit given the availability of other local, nursery unit provision in Bunscoil Cholmille and Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir. Full comments are included in Appendix H.

## **SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT**

30. The Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP) does not apply to pre-school provision. However, it is important when considering this change in pre-school provision that the host school is assessed. The following is an assessment of Gaelscoil na Daróige against the six criteria in the SSP.

### **Quality Educational Experience**

*In relation to primary provision, the SSP indicators highlight KS2 attainment levels, no more than two composite classes, a minimum of 4 teachers, the ability of the school to cater for Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils, availability of curricular and extracurricular activities, quality of the physical environment for learning and quality of pastoral care arrangements.*

31. Gaelscoil na Daróige was inspected in November 2009 and subsequently entered the formal intervention process. However, in June 2014, at the time of a second follow-up inspection, the quality of education at the Gaelscoil was assessed as 'good'. The ETI had identified that the school had important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision and would continue to monitor the school's progress.

32. The school operates three composite classes for P2/3, P4/5 and P6/7 and has a staffing complement of 4.5 (full-time equivalent) teachers.

33. The Case for Change states that the school has a breakfast club every morning and this would be extended to include the nursery pupils. There are after school clubs and there is on-going work with the local early years' child care

provision, the Dunluce Centre, to provide wraparound care for the pupils. This is supported by the ETI Inspection report dated November 2009 which states that there is a wide range of after-school cultural and sporting activities for the children and their parents, including a summer scheme.

### **Stable Enrolment Trends**

*The SSP adopts the enrolment thresholds as recommended in the Bain Report. These are minimum thresholds and apply to grant-aided schools in all sectors. An urban primary school's minimum enrolment threshold is 140 pupils. Ideally a primary school should have 7 classrooms (1 per year group). If this is not possible then it should have composite classes with no more than 2 year groups.*

34. Gaelscoil na Daróige has an approved admission and enrolment number of 15 and 81 respectively. The school's enrolment increased from 54 in 2011/12 to 69 in 2014/15 but dipped slightly in 2015/16 to 67 which is well below the SSP minimum of 140 pupils for an urban school.

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

	Approved	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Enrolment	81	39	44	54	55	61	69	67
Intake	15	15	8	11	11	12	13	7
Expected P1 Intake*	-	15	20	20	20	20	20	20
Expected Cumulative Y1 Total	-	15	35	55	75	95	115	135

\* As required by the Sustainable Schools Policy

**Table 6: Gaelscoil na Daróige – Enrolment by Year Group**

Year	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7
Actual	7	11	10	9	9	10	11
P1-P3	28			P5-P7	30		

35. Table 5 above sets out the historical intakes at Gaelscoil na Daróige against the expected enrolment as set out in the SSP. This table shows that the school's enrolments have consistently fallen short of those expected by the policy. The school has never achieved the 20 pupil intake required for an urban primary school with intakes frequently around half that level. Table 6 shows that there are fewer pupils in P1-P3 than there are in P5-P7 from which it can be determined that the school is not currently in a state of growth.



## Capital Viability

36. In September 2015, Gaelscoil na Daróige was reviewed for capital viability together with other IM schools which had not met the capital viability criteria. The schools were considered on a case by case basis but a decision was made not to approve capital funding for Gaelscoil na Daróige. This took into account that the school's enrolment remained significantly below the number required for a sustainable urban primary school and that the school had never achieved the 20 pupil intake required for capital viability. The review also took into account that the quality of education provided by the school had been assessed as good, the school's financial position, the availability of alternative IM provision and its accommodation issues.

## **Sound Financial Position**

*The SSP recommends that a school's annual finance indicates that it can live within its delegated budget and will be able to continue to do so. Where there is a deficit, the school's 3-year plan should indicate that it can be reduced or recovered.*

37. Gaelscoil na Daróige held a cumulative surplus of £1,469 at 31 March 2015. As at February 2016 the 2015-16 budget allocation was £283,011. The EA have projected a closing deficit of £7,540 for 31 March 2016 (these are provisional figures and therefore are still subject to change).

## **Strong Leadership and Management**

*The SSP highlights a number of indicators in relation to the BoG, staff and pupils. These include: BoG - views, skills and experience of the BoG. Staff - management (both curricular and organisational) attendance, turnover, morale. Pupils – behaviour, attendance and involvement in school management. A school development plan must be in place (and monitored).*

38. The ETI Inspection report of November 2009 assessed the quality of leadership in the school as 'inadequate'. A follow-up inspection dated November 2011 stated that in the interval since the original inspection the school received intensive support in developing aspects of its provision, one aspect of which was leadership and management. It pointed out that the principal had no teaching duties and needed to review the provision for the children with special educational needs. The follow-up inspection dated June 2013 stated that the principal needed to evaluate more critically whole school provision in order to effect sustained improvement and the June 2014 follow-up inspection stated that the principal needed to embed the well-developed processes for monitoring and self evaluation.

39. The June 2014 follow-up inspection did however point out that 'the principal has a clear strategic approach to monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching' and the principal and staff effectively use performance data and teacher

observations to inform planning and to ensure the needs of the children are more fully met.

40. The 2009 Inspection report states that the Governors are committed to the life of the school and, with the rest of the school community, they have worked hard to get the school established. The report points out that the Governors will need to continue to support the school in the years ahead so that the principal and teachers, can focus their attention on improving provision for the children and so raise standards.

### **Accessibility**

*The SSP highlights the need for reasonable distance and travel time to school and also suitable transport arrangements. It highlights travel times of less than 30 minutes for primary pupils.*

41. Gaelscoil na Daróige is one of three IM schools in Derry City together with Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir. The majority of pupils at the school live locally however, the schools are all within a three mile radius of each other, as detailed on the maps above, and therefore would also be accessible to these pupils. Map 4 shows the location of the primary and nursery unit pupils at these schools and this indicates that there is an overlap in catchment areas.

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

*The SSP refers to the degree and quality of parental involvement, contribution of the school to the community, presence of other features (nursery or specialist provision) and use of school buildings outside formal education.*

42. The Case for Change states that the school has very strong links with the community. Most parents live locally, are very much involved in the life of the school and engage in IM programmes and workshops. Parents from both the naíscoil and the gaelscoil attend Irish classes organised by the school staff. The ETI Inspection report dated November 2009 confirms that the school has close links with parents and facilitates the very active role they play in the life of the school.

43. The Case for Change also states that the school has high participation rates in community activities organised by the Outerwest Neighbourhood Renewal Area which also involves other schools in the area and has Shared Education links with Groarty PS and Oakgrove College. The school also joins other IM primary schools for outings and sporting events.

### **Sustainability Summary**

44. Following a period of formal intervention, the quality of education provided by this school has since been assessed as 'good' at the most recent ETI visit of February 2014. However, the school operates three composite classes. The school's enrolment falls significantly short of meeting the minimum recommended

threshold of 140 pupils in an urban school. It holds a small financial deficit. The school is accessible as the majority of pupils live locally and it maintains strong links with the local community. The follow-up inspection reports dated June 2013 and June 2014 stated that it continues to be important that the employing authority, governors and staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget in order to address the current and future needs of the children and staff. The school is not meeting all six Sustainable Schools Policy criteria.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Quality of Education at Naíscoil na Daróige**

45. The original inspection report of Naíscoil na Daróige in 2012 was published under the pre-school's previous name of Naíscoil Mhaol Íosa and it assessed the quality of education provided as 'inadequate'. However, the most recent follow-up inspection report, in February 2014, evaluated Naíscoil na Daróige as 'good'. The 2014 Inspection report advised that a new leader and naíscoil assistant were appointed in September 2012 and policies and procedures have been reviewed and developed. The report also stated that the staff have worked more consistently with the early years specialist from Altram (the Regional Advocacy and Support Group for Irish Language Early years settings in Northern Ireland).

46. The follow-up inspection recognised the strength of the leadership shown by the leader, who was identified as an effective role-model for staff. It also identified the need for the naíscoil to develop further the quality of the staff's interactions with the children in order to extend the children's learning, and concluded that ETI would monitor the school's progress.

### **Area Plan**

47. As stated above, Gaelscoil na Daróige is one of three IM schools in Derry City (alongside Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir). All of the school enrolments fall below the SSP recommended minimum for urban primary schools. The former WELB Primary Area Plan (June 2014) for Gaelscoil na Daróige stated '*The WELB, in association with the Trustees of Gaelscoil na Daróige, will keep the school under review on an annual basis within the context of the DE Sustainable Schools Policy.*' Similar comments were also included for the other two IM Primary schools.

### **Financial Implications**

48. Places in the voluntary/private sector are funded on a per place basis and allocated annually, taking account of the number of statutory pre-school places available and their assessment of demand. If a statutory nursery unit is opened at Gaelscoil Na Daróige, the requirement for recurrent funding would mean funding

would transfer to the Aggregated School Budget. The cost of the nursery class would be £46,708 for 26 part-time nursery places. However, funding is allocated based on the number of pupils enrolled.

49. It is also indicated that should the DP be approved, there would be a requirement to employ a Nursery teacher and an assistant at a cost of approximately £30,000, but this would be met from within the school's budget.

### **Accommodation**

50. The Case for Change states that the proposed 26 part-time place nursery unit will be located in the premises currently occupied by Naíscoil na Daróige. The current accommodation is located on the Gaelscoil site, however, the site is restricted and there are concerns over deficiencies in the accommodation. The EA undertook a feasibility study in relation to relocating the primary school to the Coshquin Road, Ballymagroarty, however this option has now been rejected due to the excessive cost involved which would not have represented value for money. There is insufficient evidence to suggest that the current pre-school accommodation would be suitable for the proposed statutory nursery unit.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Sustainability**

51. The evidence suggests that Gaelscoil na Daróige, to which the proposed nursery unit would be attached, faces considerable challenges in terms of stabilising its enrolment. This has been highlighted in the (former) WELB Primary Area Plan (23 June 2014). The school was also reviewed in September 2015 together with other IM schools which had not met the capital viability criteria but it was not approved, as detailed above.

52. The Case for Change states that should the proposal be approved the greater link between the nursery and primary will not only enable the school to reach the urban enrolment threshold but to surpass it and continue to develop and grow.

53. The Case for Change, while visionary is more aspirational than evidence based. It claims that *'the long-term benefits of this proposal would be recognised across three levels of provision. The improved nursery provision will increase the enrolment in Gaelscoil na Daróige, the strength of the primary provision would be contributing to the circumstances for the development of post-primary IME provision in Derry city'*. There is no evidence to show that enrolments at the primary school will increase. At present, not all pupils who attend the non-statutory pre-school, which is on the primary school site, go on to attend the Gaelscoil na Daróige.

54. The ETI follow-up inspection reports dated June 2013 and June 2014 stated that it continues to be important that the employing authority, governors and staff

plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget in order to address the current and future needs of the children and staff.

55. The host school at which a statutory nursery unit is to be established should be viable and sustainable. However as stated above, Gaelsoil na Daróige does not meet all six criteria of the Sustainable Schools Policy.

### **Need**

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

57. Consideration has been given to the total level of pre-school provision within the two and five mile radii of Naíscoil Na Daróige and, because IM providers may enter the Pre-School Education Programme even where unfilled English-Medium provision is available in the area, to IM pre-school provision specifically. This statistical information is set out in full in Appendix G.

58. In relation to pre-school provision overall, the level of provision within the two mile radius is already significantly higher than the planning figure of 95%, and indeed provides more than 100% provision in comparison to P1 places, suggesting overprovision in the area. This is corroborated by the fact that underage children have accessed statutory funded pre-school provision in each of the last two years. The level of provision within the five mile radius, which is also above the 95% planning figure, along with the number of underage children enrolled, again suggests overprovision in the wider area.

59. In relation to IM pre-school provision specifically, in both the two and five mile radii, the level of provision is significantly above the planning figure of 95%. Should the proposal be approved, the figure in the two mile radius would be over three times the number of P1 places, at 333.3%. This suggests that the proposal would lead to a high level of over provision of IM pre-school places in the area.

60. The first preference applications made to the IM settings in 2015/16 and 2016/17 are set out in Table 7 below. Although this shows an increase between 2015/16 and 2016/17 there are still sufficient places available. Also, in each of the last three years, Naíscoil Na Daróige has admitted every child who applied for a place, the highest enrolment was 17 children in 2014/15. This, combined with the information set out above, demonstrates that there is already sufficient IME pre-school provision in the area to provide a funded Irish-medium pre-school place for every child whose parents want it.

Table 7: Applications to Irish-medium settings

Setting	Places available	1 <sup>st</sup> preference applications received 2016/17	1 <sup>st</sup> preference applications received 2015/16
<i>2 mile radius</i>			
Bunscoil Cholmcille	26	13	11
Naíscoil Cholmcille	8	5	7
Naíscoil Na Daróige	12	15	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>5 mile radius</i>			
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	26	32	27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>55</b>

61. The Case for Change would appear to suggest overprovision of IM places in the area, and the resultant availability of funded IM pre-school provision may in fact be an intended outcome of the proposal, as, in setting out the perceived benefits of the proposal, the document refers to CnaG advice that parents send their children to a nursery setting for two years. However, DE aims to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.

62. The information provided does not present sufficient evidence of the need for additional IM pre-school provision in the area. The statutory and non-statutory IM providers in the area have capacity to cater for additional children should such a need arise in future. From the data presented, it is also evident that the current total number of IM pre-school places in the area exceeds the level of intake in IM Year 1 of the three IM Primary schools. Approving this proposal would increase the current over-provision of IM pre-school places.

### **Displacement**

63. Should the proposal be approved, the creation of a statutory IM nursery unit would also have the potential to displace the current good quality provision and increase the number of underage children accessing statutory pre-school places.

64. Both the non-statutory and statutory pre-school sectors are equally valued by the Department for their contribution to the pre-school education of children, with both following common curriculum guidelines and subject to the same education inspection standards.

65. As stated above, it is the Department's practice not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. This includes not ceasing funding for an existing PSEP funded playgroup and establishing statutory nursery provision as an alternative.

66. The Case for Change states that statutory provision would provide many benefits that the voluntary provision could not and cite the employment of a qualified

teacher as the most tangible benefit. It states that the delivery of the curriculum would cease to be delivered in the manner it has been to date – on a limited and curtailed basis but it would enable staff to deliver it in the holistic manner it was intended. However, the quality of the education provided by the existing pre-school has been assessed by the ETI as ‘very good’. The most recent inspection states that:

*‘the children’s educational programme is well-balanced with very good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum’.*

67. A further benefit is cited as the Naiscoil becoming an integral part of the Gaescoil and that this in turn would facilitate any potential relocation. If the school was then to be relocated, accommodation would be provided for both the primary school and the nursery unit. However, if the existing non-statutory pre-school remained the provision of a site and accommodation for it would be a matter for the pre-school’s management committee.

68. The proposal is supported by CnaG. In their letter of support, they consider that this proposal will not result in displacement and state that ‘the naíscóil setting will effectively convert from voluntary playgroup status to statutory nursery status and it will be the same children in attendance’. However, the management of the pre-school would change, the provision would no longer be a non-statutory playgroup but would be statutory and the current staff of the pre-school would also be affected.

69. CnaG go on to list a number of IM schools which have had previous DPs approved for the establishment of statutory nursery units and they state that to follow the logic of displacement then these proposals, all of which were approved, should have been refused. CnaG’s statement assumes the displacement argument was waived in these proposals. This was not the case as of the eight schools listed by CnaG, seven of these were approved because the previous Ministers exercised their discretion under the duty to encourage and facilitate the development of IM education and set aside the current policies and practices. It should also be noted that the individual circumstances in each case were taken into account.

## **Impact**

70. The Case for Change states that Gaelscoil na Daróige is one of three IME providers in the city – with each school serving different areas with substantial residential areas. It states that both the alternative providers have statutory nursery classes and this change of status would therefore not impact on them. CnaG also state that they can see no adverse impact with this proposal. Map 4 above plots the location of the pupils who attend the three schools. This shows that there is a significant overlap in catchment areas between them and so the provision of additional places at Gaelscoil na Daróige could have an impact on the two alternative pre-school settings.

## Linked Proposals

71. The Case for Change states that this DP is not linked with any other DP however, a strategic vision for IM provision in the area is required as the enrolments at all three IM primary schools are below the SSP threshold and this proposal would result in an overprovision of IM pre-school places. The need for strategic planning was also highlighted in a response received during the statutory two month objection period from within the same sector which stated that *'the approach to the development of IME should be sustainable, educationally sound, effective and represent value for money. Strategically and in the context of the foreseeable falling school population in the Derry city area this proposal does not represent an effective addition to IM provision towards ensuring the optimum use of IME resources so as to direct and use them effectively in a way which will ensure the long-term welfare of the sector in the city'*.

72. The proposal is not supported by the ETI due to the potential displacement of a good quality non-statutory pre-school setting and the uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the proposed nursery unit, given the availability of other local nursery unit provision in Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil Eadain Mhóir.

73. The EA PEAG has indicated that the numbers currently in the pre-school provision would not justify a statutory nursery (26 part-time places).

74. In line with the Recommendations of the IM Review, children applying for Year 1 at the school already have had the opportunity to avail of a high quality pre-school experience.

75. On balance and taking account of the information supplied, it is considered that the evidence does not currently support the establishment of a statutory part-time IM nursery unit at Gaelscoil na Daróige.

## RECOMMENDATION

76. Based on the evidence outlined in this submission, it is recommended that you:

- (i) Do not approve DP 454 - A statutory part-time Irish-medium nursery unit, with 26 part-time places, be established at Gaelscoil na Daróige with effect from 1 September 2016, or as soon as possible thereafter.
- (ii) Agree that this submission (with appropriate redactions) can be made available on the Department's website once the school and the EA have been notified and a press release issued.



- (iii) Note that officials are available to discuss this submission should you wish.

77. A draft press release will be provided for your consideration when you have made your decision.

78. The following appendices are attached for your consideration:

Appendix A:	Contextual information on current policy and processes for planning pre-school provision and the Development Proposal process
Appendix B:	Copy of Published DP 454
Appendix C:	Case for Change
Appendix D:	Consultation Summary
Appendix E:	EA Comments
Appendix F:	CnaG Comments
Appendix G:	DE Comments and statistics
Appendix H:	ETI Comments

*Elaine Armstrong*

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**Cc (by e-mail)**

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## **CURRENT POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR PLANNING PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION AND THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL PROCESS**

### **Pre-School Policy**

The policy position to date was set out in Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning, published on 7 October 2013. Its key actions included placing a moratorium on any new or additional full-time provision or conversion from part-time to full-time (defined as over 4.5 hours) in advance of a review of the current levels of full-time provision, existing research and the needs of children being served by it.

### **PEAG and the Pre-School Planning Process**

The Education Authority's (EA's) Pre-school Education Advisory Groups (PEAGs) are responsible for planning pre-school provision and overseeing the allocation of places to the non-statutory sector.

DE in conjunction with the EA undertakes an annual exercise to estimate the level of provision required for the following academic year. When planning pre-school provision, decisions are made on the basis of providing sufficient places for approximately 95% of the live birth statistics provided on the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS) website. While the figure of 95% is higher than the average annual application rate (usually 92%), this provides for slightly more places to be allocated than assessed as needed to account for fluctuations in patterns of demand and ensure the process runs smoothly.

### **Displacement**

It is the Department's practice not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. This includes not ceasing funding for an existing Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) funded playgroup and establishing statutory nursery provision as an alternative.

### **Provision Levels**

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

The numbers of pre-school places and associated percentages are measured against the Year One enrolments for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

### **Application of the Duty to Encourage and Facilitate IM Pre-school Education**

The Department has a statutory duty to encourage and facilitate IM Education. In accordance with the Review of Irish-Medium Education, registered IM providers with sufficient children can be funded under the Department's Pre-School Education Programme even where unfilled English-Medium provision is available in the area.

## **Development Proposal Process**

Any significant change to be made to a school can only be made through the publication of a Development Proposal (DP) as required by Article 14 (as amended) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986. DPs are therefore the means by which any significant changes required to a school

DE seeks to ensure that, regardless of the reason for the proposal, all DPs are considered in the wider context of the Department's statutory duties and policies.

DPs are brought forward by a 'Proposer'. The Proposer is the relevant school managing authority which includes the Education Authority (for Controlled schools), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (for Catholic maintained schools) as well as individual Boards of Governors of voluntary maintained schools, Voluntary Grammar Schools and Grant Maintained Integrated schools. Owners of independent schools may also bring forward a proposal to seek grant-aided status subject to meeting all the statutory requirements of a grant-aided school.

A key role of the Proposer is the development of a detailed case for change to support the proposal. This will include the rationale for the proposal together with supporting robust and verifiable evidence which clearly demonstrates that the proposal is policy compliant.

The four main stages in the DP process are:-

(i) **identification of need** *getting a proposal right at this stage will impact positively on the success of the proposal. The focus should be on educational benefits and provision of high quality education that meets the needs of children and young people and takes account of parental preference.*

(ii) **statutory pre-publication consultations**; *the proposer must consult with the Board of Governors, Staff and parents of registered pupils of the affected school. On receipt of a DP, the Education Authority (which publishes all DPs irrespective of sector) must consult with schools likely to be affected by it.*

(iii) **publication of a DP**; *the Education Authority publishes DPs on behalf of a proposer in newspapers.*

(iv) **statutory 2-month objection period**; *this is triggered at the date of publication and during this period anyone interested in or affected by a DP can submit their views (for or against a proposal) directly to DE. The public can request a meeting with Departmental Officials or the Minister at this stage of the process and these requests are normally facilitated, diaries permitting. At the end of the two month period, DE compiles and assesses all relevant information before making a recommendation on a DP to the Minister. The Minister's decision is final and concludes the DP process.*

All DPs are considered on a case by case basis within the general DP policy framework. In the case of Integrated and Irish-medium proposals full account must be taken of DE's duty to encourage and facilitate in accordance with the relevant legislation. A DP will be approved or not approved, although in some instances

approval of a DP can be subject to modification in line with Article 14(7) of the 1986 Order.

DE's power to impose conditions on DPs is limited. The Education Orders provide that the only DPs to which specific conditions can be attached are those for the establishment of Grant Maintained Integrated and voluntary Irish-medium schools). Other conditions (imposed when schools are opening or transforming) will relate to Department policies and not the approval itself.

A DP approved by the Minister must be implemented in full. Further changes can only be made through the publication of another DP.

Although legislation does not provide for appeal, the Minister's decision can be challenged through an application for judicial review.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO. 454

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A STATUTORY PART-TIME IRISH MEDIUM NURSERY UNIT AT GAELSCOIL NA DARÓIGE**

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

**A Statutory part-time Irish Medium Nursery Unit, with 26 part-time places, be established at Gaelscoil na Daróige with effect from 1 September 2016, or as soon as possible thereafter.**

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In pursuance of Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, this proposal has been submitted by the Education Authority to the Department of Education for approval.

A copy of this Proposal can be inspected at the Education Authority, 1 Hospital Road, Omagh and [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) (under schools).

Any objections 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 email: [dps@deni.gov.uk](mailto:dps@deni.gov.uk) within two months of the date of publication of this notice.

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

Gavin Boyd  
EA Interim Chief Executive

## Case for Change

**GAELSCOIL NA DARÓIGE**  
**CASE FOR CHANGE – Supporting Information**

**SUMMARY / OVERVIEW**

BOARD AREA	Education Authority, Western Region
DP NUMBER	N/A
PROPOSER	Board of Governors Gaelscoil na Daróige  Philip Ó Sioráin Chairperson, Gaelscoil na Daróige
SCHOOL(S) NAME	Gaelscoil Na Daróige Corrán Uí Nualláin Doire BT48 OPD
SCHOOL REFERENCE	204/6687
TYPE	Primary
MANAGEMENT	Irish-medium
DP PUBLICATION DATE	
PROPOSAL	<b>The Board of Governors of Gaelscoil na Daróige proposes the establishment of a STATUTORY PART-TIME IRISH-MEDIUM NURSERY UNIT with 26 part-time places to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.</b>

**STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

BY THE PROPOSER	I confirm that the school(s) Board of Governors, staff and parents of pupils were consulted on ... (provide details of meeting at 'Statutory Consultation' section) SIGNED: <i>Philip Sioráin</i> (Philip Ó Sioráin) DATE: 10 December 2015
BY THE BOARD EA-Western?	I confirm that the schools which the board consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on  (provide details of meeting at 'Statutory Consultation' section) SIGNED: <i>E. J. O'Leary</i> DATE: 11 Feb 2016.

**ASSOCIATED PROPOSALS**

N/A

1

## **1. BACKGROUND**

### ***1.1 Brief Description of the school***

Gaelscoil na Daróige is a co-educational primary school located in the Ballymagroarty area of Derry City. It was founded in 2005. It is an inter-denominational school. Gaelscoil na Daróige was awarded grant-maintained status in 2009. The school was set up by a group of parents who wished their children to avail of Irish-medium Education. These parents still remain eager in ensuring their children continue their education through an Irish language programme and they are totally committed to their children's education.

Gaelscoil na Daróige's staff provide a caring, friendly ethos for its pupils. They guarantee each child is valued equally in every way possible. The children's achievements are celebrated and recognised each week in assembly with prize giving to encourage them further. Parents are very much involved in the life of the school and the children's work in the school. The Governors are also committed to the life of the school. There is a whole-school approach to pastoral care and children are put first by the whole school community. Staffs are trained in Child Protection and adhere to the school Pastoral Care policy which have been advised and agreed by the Board of Governors.

Naiscoil na Daróige was established in 2003 and this led directly to the establishment of the Gaelscoil two years later. The naiscoil is currently located on the same site as Gaelscoil na Daróige and is the main pupil feeder for Gaelscoil na Daróige.

In the wider context of the school, the Estates' Operation Team for the Department of Education have met with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive regarding a possible relocation to a more suitable site situated approximately 50 yards away on the Coshquin Road, Ballymagroarty.

### ***1.2 Location***

Gaelscoil na Daróige is located at Corrán Uí Nualláin, Ballymagroarty, Derry City BT48 0PD

### ***1.3 Date of Implementation***

1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 or the earliest date possible thereafter.

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

None

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

#### ***1.5.1 Quality Educational Experience***

In a follow up inspection in June 2014, the following important quality of teaching improvements were noted:

- The principal has a clear, strategic approach to monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching including carrying out planned classroom observations, scrutinizing children’s work, and monitoring teachers’ planning.
- The principal and staff use performance data effectively and teacher observations to better inform the planning and ensure that the needs of the children are more fully met.
- The children with statements of special educational needs are identified early and appropriate and effective strategies are put in place to meet their individual learning and emotional needs.
- The standards of the children’s work and the quality of the teaching observed continue to improve.
- The quality of teaching observed ranged from good to outstanding.

The report also stated that “in the areas inspected, the quality of education provided is now good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision.”

The Board of Governors and staff continue to improve raising standards in the school. The pupils of Gaelscoil na Daróige benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular provision: Morning, Afterschool and Homework Clubs, which promote well-being and provide wraparound services for the school children. There are also teacher-led interest clubs with excellent attendance rates, which are of excellent educational benefit to the children.

#### **1.5.2 Stable Enrolment Trends**

The enrolment has increased from 44 pupils in 2010/11 to 69 pupils in the current academic year of 2015/16 – this represents nearly 60% growth in the school. Indeed, the WELB Primary Area Plan (2014) stated that Gaelscoil na Daróige is a “developing school” with “increasing enrolment”.

#### **1.5.3 Sound Financial Position**

Table A illustrates the projected budget spend for Gaelscoil na Daróige. This projection has an average underspend of 1.92%, which is comfortably within the 5% accepted.

<b>Projected Budget Spending for Gaelscoil na Daróige</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Resources (incl previous years carryover)</b>	<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>Carryover</b>	<b>% Carryover of Total Resources</b>
2014-15	£267,103	£265,635	£1,468	0.55%
2015-16	£269,920,	£264,239,	£5,681	2.10%
2016-17	£283,600	£274,729	£8,871	3.13%

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

The Board of Governors, along with the Principal, have demonstrated their capacity to lead the school effectively and ensure high quality provision is delivered. The school entered into a formal intervention process in 2009 and the governors showed a willingness and ability to address the failings and subsequently this led the school out of the intervention process phase. The school is classified as ‘good’ in their latest ETI report June 2014.



### **1.5.5 Accessibility**

The school is readily accessible to the wider Ballymagroarty/Creevagh area. Most pupils live within 5km of the school. There are travel times of around 20 minutes per journey for the pupils living furthest from the school. The majority of pupils come from the immediate Ballymagroarty/Creevagh area or have grandparents who live locally. Most children walk to school, with a number travelling by car. (Please see Paragraph 4.4.2 for Pupil Distribution map).

### **1.5.6 Strong Links with the Community**

Gaelscoil na Daróige has very strong links with the community. Most parents of the pupils live locally to the school. Parental support in Gaelscoil na Daróige is of a high level. Programmes and workshops are provided by parents to support the needs of the school and dispel fears about Irish-medium Education. Parents from both the Naiscoil and Gaelscoil also attend Irish classes organised by the school staff to offer encouragement and to support their children with homework.

The school has high participation rates in community activities organised by the Outerwest Neighbourhood Renewal Area which also involves other schools in the area. The Gaelscoil is also engaged in Shared Education work with Groarty Integrated Primary School and Oakgrove Secondary School. This work includes literacy and community relations work; for example, a joint choir and soccer team have been formed between the two primary schools. Gaelscoil na Daróige has strong links with other local Gaelscoileanna and join frequently with these schools on school outings and sporting events for the pupils.

## **2. RATIONALE FOR CHANGE**

### **2.1 Reason for change**

This proposal is to establish a statutory nursery unit within Gaelscoil na Daróige in order to provide parents and their children with the optimum start to their education. This development proposal is in line with the Early Years (0-6) strategy proposals that aim to:

- Improve the access to Irish medium pre-school provision; and
- Maintain part-time provision with the statutory preschool sector;

The current Programme of Government 2011-15 includes a commitment to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it. Registered Irish-medium providers can enter the programme even where unfilled English-medium provision is available in the area provided that sufficient demand for the provision is evidenced. This development proposal also falls in line with:

- Recommendation No. 2 from the Review of Irish-medium Education Report (2008)
- The obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and,
- The statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education (Article 89, Education Northern Ireland Order 1998)

There were two options considered for Naiscoil na Daróige; to remain as a voluntary naiscoil or to apply to become a statutory Naiscoil. The rationale for changing to a statutory Naiscoil is that there are many added benefits associated with the statutory provision that the voluntary provision does not provide.

The most tangible benefit is the employment of a qualified teacher. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta advises parents to send their children to an nursery setting for two years (the equivalent to one year full-time) in order to give the children the best opportunity to pick up the language. Language acquisition and age are very strongly linked. As such, it is vital that children are afforded the best opportunities at the earliest stage and in this regard, a nursery setting which is led by a qualified teacher is the strongest option for the children and their linguistic developments. Logic dictates that more exposure to the target language, coupled with increased capacity of staff (i.e. the deployment of a qualified teacher), will result in higher quality provision for the pupils. The employment of a teacher also improves the ability of the provision to identify and cater for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and the newly established statutory provision would then be able to avail of additional services from the regional Educational Authority.

Due to the potential relocation of Gaelscoil na Daróige and also, the symbiotic relationship between it and the naiscoil, it is the collective view of all concerned that the change of status to the naiscoil from voluntary to statutory would make it an integral part of Gaelscoil na Daróige. This, in turn, would facilitate any potential relocation as it would be managed by the Board of Governors of the school. It is a logical and practical step to take in order for the school to become a sustainable and vibrant entity.

## **2.2 Area Planning Impact**

Recent enrolment in the school over the last 4 years shows an upward trend – from 54 to 69 pupils, which is a growth of nearly 30%. Furthermore, the number of unfilled places is down from 27 in 2011/12 to just 12 unfilled places in 2014/15, which represents a decrease of 44%. Should this proposal be accepted, it is logical that this greater link between Naiscoil and Gaelscoil na Daróige, and due to the symbiotic nature of their relationship, will result in even greater enrolment. This will not only enable the school to reach the urban enrolment threshold but to surpass it and continue to develop and grow and thus, realise the aims of the sustainable schools policy. As regards the impact on other provision, this is one of three primary IME providers in the city - with each school serving different areas of the city with substantial residential areas. As well as this, both of the alternate IM providers have statutory nursery classes of their own and as such, this change of status would not impact on any other IME provision.

The long-term benefits of this proposal would be recognised across three levels of provision. The improved nursery provision will increase the enrolment in Gaelscoil na Daróige, the strength of the primary provision would be contributing to the circumstances for the development of post-primary IME provision in Derry City. *This increased enrolment would be vital in supporting any future local post-primary IM provider?*

*“there has been a gap in the strategic development of post-primary provision”* (Minister of Education, John O’Dowd, 4th November 2014).

In his response to the Advisory Group Report on the Strategic Development of Irish-medium Post-primary Education, Minister O'Dowd acknowledged that there have previously been gaps in Post-primary IME provision. The Board of Governors envisage that the long-term outcome of this proposal will contribute to closing that gap.

In the context of Area Planning and sustainability, statutory provision is as an opportunity to increase and improve provision of IME within Ballymagroarty and the surrounding areas. Moreover, it would consolidate the school and enable it to realise sustainability.

The Board believes that parents in the surrounding area would be able to access IME consistent with the Department of Education's own policy on IME and in keeping with the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages. The delivery of the curriculum would cease to be delivered in the manner it has been delivered to date; on a limited and curtailed basis. On the contrary, it would enable staff to deliver it in the holistic manner it was intended.

This development proposal is not linked with any other development proposal. However, the Estates' Operation Team for the Department of Education have met with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive about a possible relocation to a more suitable site situated approximately 100 yards away on the Coshquin Road, Ballymagroarty.

### **3. EDUCATIONAL IMPACT**

A qualified teacher will be employed to teach in Naíscóil Na Daróige. This means that teaching is provided by someone who has a degree level qualification in Education, trained in every curriculum area, which will help improve the educational and linguistic standards and pupil attainment both in the pre-school and in the primary school at the end of Key Stages in both Literacy and Numeracy. This will ultimately enhance skills, capacity and attainment in the local area, as the majority of pupils live in the local area.

ICT has also been a high priority for Gaelscoil na Daróige, with every class having laptops and interactive whiteboards. Naíscóil na Daróige will benefit from collaboration in this area with the other Foundation Stage teachers and pupils. A qualified teacher in the pre-school setting will also help parental and community confidence and thus help maintain steady enrolment trends in the long term, in turn helping to ensure the future sustainability of Gaelscoil na Daróige and Irish-medium Education in the Ballymagroarty/Creevagh, Coshquin, Knockeanna, Hazelbank, Foyle Springs, Springtown, Grangemore, Oranmore, Kylemore, Hatmore, Glenowen and Rosemount areas.

The school offers a breakfast club every morning and would be able to roll this out for nursery pupils as well with statutory status. There are after-school clubs and there is on-going work with the local early years' child care provision, the Dunluce Centre, to provide wraparound care for all our pupils.

The SENCO along with the class teachers, co-ordinators and principal identify children for the register to receive extra support. This is based on standardised scores, levels of progression, a profile of pupils' work and in some cases referrals by outside agencies. Given that 31% of our pupils have Special Educational Needs at present, a qualified teacher will

also help with the early identification of learning difficulties, in order to provide early intervention in both pre-school and Gaelscoil na Daróige.

The Educational Psychology service will also have an input in assessing individual children's needs, thus ensuring that the specific needs of particular children are identified and met through the accessing of outreach supports, which is not facilitated under the current voluntary status of Naiscoil na Daróige. Parental support in Gaelscoil na Daróige is of a high level. Parenting programmes and workshops would extend to pre-school parents to support the needs and allay fears about Irish-medium Education, while also providing training and skills to help them access employment / further education.

Gaelscoil na Daróige is committed to a high standard of Continued Professional Development (CPD), especially since it achieved its "good school" status from ETI, June 2014. That commitment to CPD has been part of the fibre of Gaelscoil na Daróige; indeed local people have gained invaluable work experience and qualifications through working with Gaelscoil na Daróige. Additionally, Gaelscoil na Daróige has reached out to a Shared Education partner school to join in its CPD programme. The Principal and Coordinators have been responsible for training/mentoring staff in other schools in management and core curriculum areas.

#### 4. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

##### 4.1 School Enrolment

Table B illustrates the current and historical enrolment at Gaelscoil na Daróige. The total enrolment of the Gaelscoil has grown consecutively for the last 5 years and in doing so, decreased the amount of unfilled places. The figures show that there has been an approximate growth of 30% in the school population since 2011. In the same period, as a direct result of the increasing enrolment, unfilled places have dropped from 27 (representing 34% of all school places) to 12 (representing 15% of all school places) and this equates to a 44% reduction in the amount of unfilled places within Gaelscoil na Daróige.

Current and Historical Enrolment at Gaelscoil na Daróige			
Year	Approved Enrolment	Actual Enrolment	Unfilled Places
2011/12	81	54	27
2012/13	81	55	26
2013/14	81	61	20
2014/15	81	69	12

##### 4.2 School Admissions

Table C shows the current and historical enrolments at Gaelscoil na Daróige. They show that the enrolment has remained steady with gradual increase over the last four years.

Current and Historical Admissions at Gaelscoil na Daróige					
Year	Applications for P1: 1 <sup>st</sup> Preferences	Total Preferences Considered	Admitted	Approved Admission Number	Temporary Variation Approved (i.e. for one year only)
2011/12	8	8	8	15	-
2012/13	10	10	10	15	-
2013/14	10	10	10	15	-
2014/15	11	11	11	15	-

Table D shows the current and historical enrolment at Naíscoil na Daróige over three years. Again, as with the primary 1 enrolment, the figures indicate a steady enrolment. This illustrates the demand that there is locally for IME and it is expected that this demand will grow further with the added significance that statutory places would bring to the Gaelscoil.

Current and Historical Enrolment at Naíscoil na Daróige				
Year	Applications for P1: 1 <sup>st</sup> Preferences	Total Preferences Considered	Admitted	Approved Admission Number
2013/14	12	13	13	Variable
2014/15	14	17	17	According
2015/16	10	14	14	To Applications

#### 4.3 Alternative Schools

The table below illustrates the number of pupils locally entering into Irish-medium education. The alternate IME providers have strong enrolments at pre-school level, as evidenced below. The enrolments of both statutory Irish-medium nursery units (located within Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir and Bunscoil Cholmcille) have consistently been at 26 or higher in each of the last five years (See Tables F and G from DENI's Schools+ Database). It is envisioned that the change of status will be reflected in increased confidence amongst prospective parents and that this, in turn, will result in stronger enrolment to similar levels as seen in the other IME schools in the city.

2014/15 Local Irish-medium Pre-School and Primary 1 Provision							
REF	School Name	Distance (Miles)	Nursery Places (f/t p/t)	Recept.	Voluntary /Private Places	Total Places	P1
2BB-0511	Naíscoil na Daróige	-	-	-	17	17	-
204-6687	Gaelscoil na Daróige	-	-	-	-	-	11
204-6646	Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir	2.6	28	-	-	28	20
203-6574	Bunscoil Cholmcille	2.3	26	-	-	26	10
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>41</b>

Table F

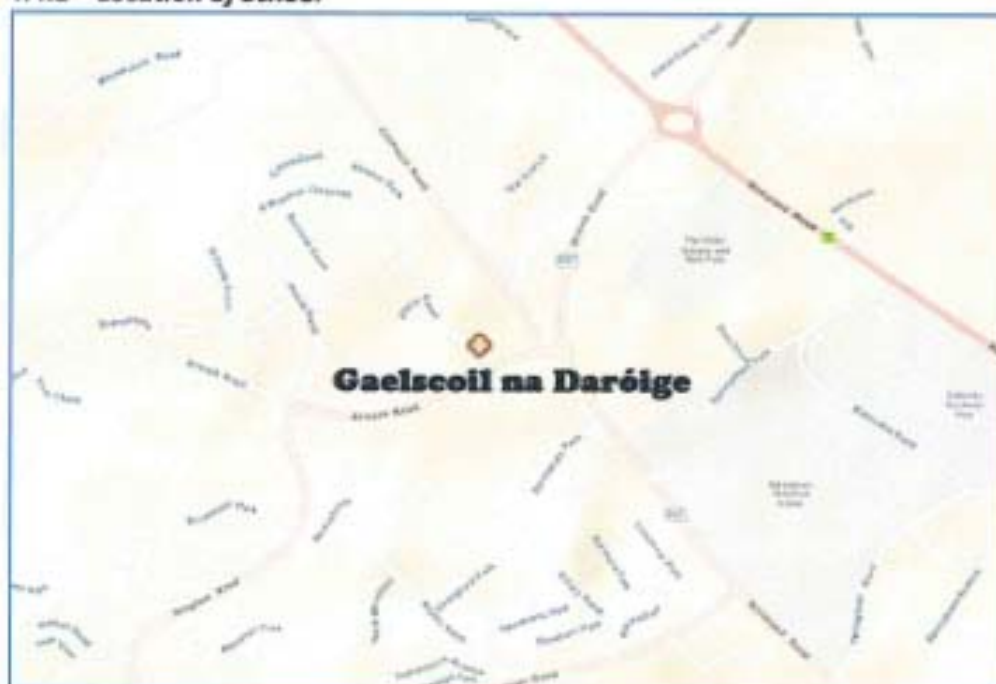
Institution	Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir		Inst Ref No			204-6646
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	
Total pupils	149	146	139	140	138	
Total male	83	83	70	72	69	
Total female	66	63	69	68	69	
Nursery pupils	26	26	26	27	28	
Reception pupils	0	0	0	0	0	
Year 1	21	17	14	15	20	
Year 2	17	21	16	13	13	
Year 3	19	17	17	16	12	
Year 4	22	18	15	19	16	
Year 5	13	20	19	12	17	
Year 6	15	13	20	20	12	
Year 7	16	14	12	19	20	

Table G

Institution	Bunscoil Cholmáille		Inst Ref No			203-6574
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	
Total pupils	142	126	123	117	114	
Total male	75	62	63	61	58	
Total female	67	64	60	56	56	
Nursery pupils	26	26	26	26	26	
Reception pupils	0	0	0	0	0	
Year 1	26	13	12	17	10	
Year 2	11	21	12	12	15	
Year 3	19	9	20	12	12	
Year 4	13	18	9	15	12	
Year 5	16	13	16	9	15	
Year 6	10	16	12	15	9	
Year 7	21	10	16	11	15	

#### 4.4 Mapping

##### 4.4.1 Location of School



#### 4.4.2 Distribution of pupils



#### 4.4.3 Alternative Provision



## **5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

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

If the proposal is approved, the posts of Nursery Teacher and Assistant would need to be drawn up, advertised and interviews conducted. This process should take no longer than 8 weeks. This is clearly realistic within the timescale and with the intention of opening the new provision in September 2016.

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

The inclusion of the statutory provision within the primary school would not immediately effect the enrolment of the school. It is envisioned, however, that the statutory provision would further strengthen future Primary 1 enrolment and enable Gaelscoil na Daróige to reach and surpass the urban enrolment threshold. With regards to longer term implications, the successful implementation of this proposal should mean an eventual increase in approved enrolment will be needed.

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

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

## **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

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

The change from voluntary to statutory provision would mean funding would transfer from Early Years to AWPU. As such, the cost of the nursery class would be £46,708 for 26 part-time nursery places, according to LMS Common Funding Scheme 2015/16.

### ***6.2 Staffing***

A Nursery teacher and an assistant would need to be employed at a cost of approximately £30,000.

### ***6.3 Transport***

There are no additional transport concerns.

### ***6.4 Accommodation***

The nursery would be housed in a prefabricated mobile unit within the same building as the current voluntary provision. There are currently no capital proposals/minor works



applications submitted on behalf of the school. There are no immediate changes that would be required to the housing of the nursery provision.

## **7. STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

### **7.1 Proposer**

- (a) **Appendix 1:** Minutes recorded at a Board of Governors meeting, Gaelscoil na Daróige - note that the 'Governors have agreed to submit a DP for statutory Naiscoil'.
  - (b) **Appendix 2:** Minutes recorded at committee meeting for Naiscoil na Daróige note that all have agreed with the submission of DP for statutory naiscoil
  - (c) **Appendix 3:** Minutes of Public meeting in relation to the proposal of a statutory nursery for GS na Daróige. At the meeting parents, staff and friends of the school were all in agreement of the proposal for a statutory naiscoil.
  - (d) **Appendix 4:** Consultation with Principals of other IM schools in Derry City  
Mary Nicailin Principal GS Éadain Mhóir and Seán Mac Cionnaith Principal BS Cholmcille
- 

### **7.2 Regional Education Authority**

- a. *Details of consultation that the REA feels may be affected by Proposal [List of Schools/Dates of letters & meetings]*
- b. *Summary of views [Number of responses, recurring themes, petitions, support/opposition]*

### Consultation summary

The following points have been put forward regarding the **opposition** to the proposal:

- The proposal is **not** supportive of Naíscoil Dhoire or Bunscoil Cholmcille and would be likely to contribute to compounding, exacerbating and embedding the fragmentation of IM services; the consequences of fragmentation and sustainability issues for all existing providers of IM Education in the city;
- It shows a lack of coherent, agreed planning;
- A lack of any strategic, collegiate or measured approach;
- ad hoc and singular-site development approaches;
- no evidence of an agreed future landscape for IM Education;
- no consideration of Area-Planning approaches, aims or principles;
- existing providers can already provide sufficient places for parents interested in IM Education;
- there are sustainability considerations;
- cannot endorse deliberate planning for over-supply of provision;
- same catchment area with multiple existing providers;
- travel times to existing providers within tolerance levels;
- fragmentation of services;
- avoidance of duality within a small IM Education sector;
- excessive levels of provision within a small IM Education sector;
- opportunities to avail of economies of scale in sector further eroded;
- downward and projected demographic trends in evidence;
- resultant negative dynamics in schools, on intakes and on budgets;
- compounding of competitive environment in small IM Education sector; and
- potential regressive, operational, daily consequences for existing providers.

In **support** of the proposal the following points have been put forward:

- The school operates in an area of high social deprivation;

- Children in English Medium (EM) provision can access free school meals (entitlement in the area is over 50%) – children in IM setting cannot have this for their children, subsequently IM is a less attractive choice;
- Significant difference in money allocation per child and issue of retaining quality staff – staff in voluntary nursery do not have access to the same professional development training provided by EA.
- Statutory EM providers can avail of EA training at no cost to their budget.
- Having 26 funded places will create stability and confidence in the community.
- The Department has obligations to provide equal opportunities for parents who wish to have their child educated through the medium of Irish.
- There is an inability for students with SEN to access the required support.
- Local EM provision available for one and a half to two hours more per day – by choosing to have child taught through IM means additional childcare costs.
- The students and community will benefit from an appropriately resourced and effectively managed unit.

Education Authority comment



Chief Executive Gavin Boyd

The Secretary  
Department of Education  
Rathgael House  
Balloo Road  
BANGOR  
Co Down BT19 7PR

Our Ref: EA/SMcC/SH

Date: 22 March 2016

**For the Attention of the Area Planning Policy Team**

Dear Sir/Madam

**Development Proposal No. 454 – Establishment of a Statutory Part-time Irish Medium Unit, with 26 Places at Gaelscoil na Daróige**

In considering the above Development Proposal, the EA Board Members considered the background to the proposal as outlined in the Summary Paper and Case for Change presented to members at the Education Committee meeting held on 11 February 2016.

Members considered the current provision within the Derry city area and noted that, at the present time, the numbers seeking Irish Medium pre-school provision is in excess of the number of pupils entering Year 1 Irish Medium Primary Schools in the area. The Western area PEAG indicated that the numbers currently in the pre-school provision would not provide for a feasible Statutory Nursery (26 part-time places).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sinead McCartan', is written above the printed name.

**Sinead McCartan**  
**Planning and Development Officer**

### Conhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) Comment

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, in the context of area planning and sustainable schools, fully supports Development Proposal 454 to establish a nursery unit at Gaelscoil na Daróige.

Gaelscoil na Daróige is the sole provider of Irish-medium education (IME) in Ballymagroarty and neighbouring areas of Derry and furthermore, there is no plan for additional IME provision in this area.

There is no other Irish-medium pre-school provision in the locality for those families who wish their children to progress to Irish-medium primary education. The provision of a statutory IME pre-school will enhance and enrich the children's educational experience and furthermore, prepare them for the immersion setting in Gaelscoil na Daróige.

The IM Review acknowledges the fact that Statutory Provision produces better outcomes for children than voluntary settings, citing the EPPNI study as follows:

“There are significant differences between pre-school settings and their impact on children. Nursery schools/classes have the overall best outcomes, with good outcomes also for playgroups. Other types of pre-school produce benefits but to a lesser extent”, Para 10.14.

There is an obligation under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) to provide pre-school education in a minority language as it is recognised how vital language acquisition of the target-language is in the early years. The current arrangements in Ballymagroarty do not meet the combined obligations under the ECRML and the Department of Education's Statutory Duty to encourage and facilitate IME. Moreover, the employment of a fully qualified IME teacher into the pre-school setting will ensure that an appropriate IME is being delivered and furthermore, children will be equipped to move into their IM primary education. This is a view that is canvassed in the Review of Irish Medium education at Paragraph 10.5:

“The Project Board noted that practitioners in Irish-medium Education could not emphasise strongly enough the benefits that they believe accrue from a high-quality pre-school Irish-medium experience. In particular, a high-quality Irish-medium pre-school experience helps children from English-speaking homes access the curriculum from the beginning of Year 1, if they then attend an Irish-medium primary school.”

The nearest IME provision within the city Bunscoil Cholmcille, is approximately 3 miles away. All other pre-school provision within the Gaelscoil na Daróige catchment area is English-medium. It is clear therefore, DP 454 for statutory provision in Gaelscoil na Daróige will meet a need in that area and increase parental access to high-quality statutory IM pre-school provision.

In the context of area planning and sustainability, it is anticipated that the children (18) in the IME pre-school will progress to Gaelscoil na Daróige contributing to the long-term sustainability of the Gaelscoil. Within the Ballymagroarty area the choice

of statutory pre-school provision is only available through English. This has a detrimental impact on genuine parental choice. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta does not consider that the premise of 'displacement' is rational or reasonable in the circumstances.

There will be no displacement. Rather, the naíscoil setting will effectively convert from voluntary playgroup status to statutory nursery status and it will be the same children in attendance. Therefore, 'displacement' cannot be considered in this instance.

To follow the logic of 'displacement' then, the Development Proposals for Naíscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh, Naíscoil na gCrann, Naíscoil an Chaistil, Naíscoil Éadain Mhóir, Naíscoil an tSratha Báin; Naíscoil Bheann Mhadagáin, Naíscoil an tSeanchaí and Naíscoil Eoghain, all of which were approved should have been refused. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta therefore, advises that the rationale for approving the development proposals for the aforementioned statutory pre-schools and also, for approving the Development Proposal for Naíscoil na Móna in 2015 should apply in the case of Naíscoil na Daróige.

Therefore, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta cannot see any adverse impact with this development proposal. On the contrary, it will add to and further enhance the overall IME provision within the Gaelscoil na Daróige catchment area and contribute to ensuring its long-term sustainability.

## Appendix G

### DE comment(s) and Statistics

#### 1. Historical Enrolments

##### Naíscoil na Daróige

2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall	Funded	Overall
16	17	13	21	13	13	17	17	12	12

#### 2. Historical Intake and Enrolments - Gaelscoil na Daróige

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Intake	11	11	12	13	7
Enrolment	54	55	61	69	67

#### 3. Alternative Provision for Naíscoil na Daróige BT48 OPD (within a 3 mile radius)

Ref No	School	Distance (in miles)	Oct 2015 Enrolment	Funded	Total Enrolment
<b>Nursery Schools</b>					
2116023	The Academy Nursery School	2.2	71		79
2116266	Bligh's Lane Nursery School	2.7	56		56
2116267	Carnhill Nursery School	1.9	52		52
2116336	Galliagh Nursery School	2.2	55		55
2116345	Belmont Nursery School	2.4	80		80
<b>Nursery Units</b>					
2030364	Rosemount Primary School	1.9	61		61
2010380	Londonderry Model PS	2.0	30		30
2030381	Holy Child PS, Londonderry	2.5	53		53
2016071	Greenhaw Primary School	2.0	52		52
2036084	Steelstown Primary School	2.4	30		30
2036142	St Brigid's P S, Carnhill	2.0	31		31
2036227	St Paul's PS, Slievemore	1.6	27		27
2036472	Holy Family PS, Ballymagroarty	1.4	61		61
2036555	St Eugene's PS, Londonderry	2.3	26		26
<b>Irish-medium Nursery Unit</b>					
2036574	Bunscoil Cholmcille	2.4	26		26
2046646	Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	3.0	26		26
<b>Voluntary Playgroups</b>					
2AB-0040	St Bernadette's Playgroup	0.7	17		17
2AB-0043	Rainbow Child & Family Centre	1.4	23		23
2AB-0045	St Joseph's Community P/Group	1.9	20		20
2AB-0071	Naíscoil Cholmcille	2.9	8		13

The nearest alternative Irish-medium Pre-school provision is Bunscoil Cholmcille, Londonderry which has a Nursery Unit with 26 full time funded places, 2.4 miles away.

#### 4. Historical Enrolments

- Nursery Schools

Ref no.	School	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
		FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
2116023	The Academy NS	26	52	27	53	28	52	26	52	27	52
2116266	Bligh's Lane NS	53	0	55	0	52	0	55	0	56	0
2116267	Carnhill NS	52	0	52	0	52	0	52	0	52	0
2116336	Galliagh NS	54	0	52	0	53	0	54	0	55	0
2116345	Belmont NS	28	52	28	53	29	53	29	53	29	52

\*unverified

- Irish-medium Primary Schools

School ref	School name	Approved enrolment number	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
2036574	Bunscoil Cholmcille	196	100	97	91	88	83
2046646	Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	145	120	113	113	110	112
2046687	Gaelscoil na Daróige	81	54	55	61	69	67
Total		422	274	265	265	267	262

- Irish-medium Primary Schools – Irish-medium Year 1 admissions

School ref	School name	Approved admissions number	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
2036574	Bunscoil Cholmcille	25	13	12	17	10	11
2046646	Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	21	17	14	15	20	23
2046687	Gaelscoil na Daróige	15	11	11	12	13	7
Total		61	41	37	44	43	41



### **Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards Division (CQSD) comments:**

- In effect, this DP proposes that the existing ‘voluntary’ pre-school provision Naíscóil na Daróige changes its status to ‘statutory’ pre-school provision as a nursery unit under the management of Gaelscoil na Daróige. The level of provision proposed is 26 part-time places. The Naíscóil is located on the same site as the Gaelscoil and at October 2015 (school census day) there were 12 children enrolled.
- Gaelscoil na Daróige was last inspected by the ETI in June 2014; this was the school’s third follow-up since the original inspection in November 2009. The latest inspection reported that in the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is now ‘good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The follow-up inspection identified the need for the principal to continue to embed the well-developed processes for monitoring and self evaluation.
- Gaelscoil na Daróige’s enrolment increased steadily since the school received grant-aided status from 39 in 2009/10 to 69 in 2014/15, however the 2015/16 declined slightly to 67 (per October 2015 census); only 7 pupils were enrolled in Year 1 in 2015/16. The enrolment remains significantly below the number required for a sustainable urban primary school (140).
- The ETI inspection in June 2014 reported that “It continues to be important that the employing authority, 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.” The Gaelscoil needs to be able to demonstrate its future sustainability in respect of its Year 1 to Year 7 provision and, in terms of providing a high quality education for its pupils, this should be its current focus.

**Conclusion:** CQSD does not consider it is appropriate for the Gaelscoil to be seeking to establish a statutory nursery unit at this time given the additional management responsibility and resource implications this would entail. At the very minimum, the Gaelscoil first needs to be able to demonstrate the sustainability of its Year 1 to Year 7 provision. **CQSD does not support this Proposal.**

### **IRISH-MEDIUM & INTEGRATED EDUCATION TEAM (IMIE) comments:**

Irish-medium and Integrated Education (IMIE) Team notes that this Development Proposal references the establishment of a statutory part-time Irish-medium nursery unit, with 26 part-time places, at Gaelscoil na Daróige, with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

There is current a voluntary playgroup operating at the school. It has 12 PEAG funded places in 2015/16. In February 2014, ETI concluded that provision at the playgroup was now good. IMIE commentary is, based on the assumption that

should a new 26 part-time place nursery unit will open at Gaelscoil Na Daróige, the playgroup managing committee will close the pre-school year within the existing voluntary playgroup.

The Pre-school Education Programme is a partnership between statutory and voluntary/private pre-school providers and both sectors are equally valued for their contribution to the education of pre-school children. It has been practice not to displace voluntary provision through the establishment of statutory provision where there is sufficient pre-school provision in the area.

In light of DE's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education and in recognition of the benefits of an immersion experience at pre-school for those pupils wishing to access Irish-medium primary provision, DE considers the need for Irish-medium pre-school provision in the context of Recommendation 2 of the Irish-medium Review (2009) that Irish-medium providers with sufficient children should be allowed to enter the existing funding programme even where unfilled English-medium provision is available in the area.

### Level of Provision

This proposal would increase the level of Irish-medium pre-school provision on this site from 12 PEAG funded places in 2015/16 to 26 places. However, evidence indicates there is already sufficient Irish-medium pre-school provision within a 2 mile radius of Gaelscoil na Daróige to meet demand.

DE and the Education Authority plan to provide sufficient pre-school provision in local areas to meet demand for places: planning is on the basis of providing places equivalent to 95% of target age children across Northern Ireland.

In this case, the level Irish -medium pre-school provision compared to Year 1 intake within a 2 mile radius of the school was 242% in 2015/16. This is based on 46 funded pre-school places and Year 1 enrolments of 19. The level of provision in 2014/15 was 213%. Over both years, provision is well in excess of the required 95%. Approving this proposal would increase the current over-provision of Irish-medium pre-school places.

### Demand for places at Gaelscoil Na Daróige

In looking specifically at Gaelscoil na Daróige there is also no evidence of sufficient demand to sustain a 26 place nursery unit at the school. The existing playgroup has 12 PEAG funded places in 2015/16. As set out in Table A below, the highest the number of funded places was 17 in 2014/15.

The table also records Gaelscoil na Daróige's Year 1 intakes for the period 2011/12 to 2015/16. The highest intake number has been 13 pupils in 2014/15. The 2015/16 intake is only 7.

Table A - PEAG Funded Pre-School Places at Naíscoil na ~~Dá~~ and P1 enrolments at Gaelscoil Na Daróige

Year	PEAG Funded Places	P1 enrolments at Gaelscoil Na Daróige
2011/12	16	11
2012/13	13	11
2013/14	13	12
2014/15	17	13
2015/16	12	7

### Conclusion and Recommendation

IMIE would be concerned that should a nursery unit be established it may either have to admit under-age children, which is not desirable, or alternatively not fill to capacity placing strain on the school's budget. In addition given the existing capacity levels within a two mile radius of the school, it is likely that in order to utilise the additional places that existing capacity from other local providers would suffer displacement.

In conclusion, IMIE does not support the Development Proposal for the establishment of a nursery unit at Gaelscoil Na ~~Dá~~ige. In light of the statutory duty, a reasonable adjustment has been made to pre-school policy to support the funding of Irish-medium pre-school even where unfilled English-medium provision is available in the area. In this case, there is already provision of sufficient Irish-medium pre-school places to meet demand in the area. There is also evidence of insufficient demand for 26 places at Gaelscoil na Daróige.

In line with the Recommendations of the Irish-medium review, children applying for Year 1 at the school already have the opportunity to avail of a high quality pre-school experience.

## **Input from Early Years Team**

### **Introduction**

The Education Authority, at the request of the Board of Governors of Gaelscoil Na Daróige, published Development Proposal Number 454 on 10 December 2015 proposing that a 26 part-time place Irish-Medium statutory nursery unit be established at Gaelscoil Na Daróige from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

The Case for Change advises that Naiscoil Na Daróige, an Irish-Medium voluntary pre-school provider currently located at Gaelscoil Na Daróige, which provided 12 part-time Irish-Medium pre-school places in the 2015/16 academic year, would simultaneously close and the new statutory unit would open within the same premises, essentially effecting a change of management type at the setting.

### **Background**

The Case for Change does not suggest that the proposal seeks to address a lack of Irish-Medium pre-school places in the area, but rather sets out other perceived benefits of a change of management type.

The Case for Change states that the most tangible benefit would be the employment of a qualified teacher. It does not acknowledge that voluntary pre-school settings may also employ qualified teachers, or advise whether the setting has made any attempt to do so. It suggests that the addition of a qualified teacher to the pre-school provision at the setting would improve linguistic outcomes for children and improve provision for children with Special Educational Needs. It is not entirely clear why this is deemed to be the case, or why the Board of Governors consider provision at the voluntary setting, which has demonstrated its ability to raise standards and was given a 'good' rating during its most recent ETI inspection (the same grade as the statutory primary school provision at Gaelscoil na Daróige) to be less effective than teacher led statutory provision. Both the voluntary and statutory pre-school sectors are equally valued by the Department for their contribution to the pre-school education of children, with both following common curriculum guidelines and subject to the same education inspection standards.

The Case of Change also suggests that a change of management type would help facilitate any potential relocation of provision and would be a "logical and practical step" for the primary school, which had 69 pupils and 12 unfilled places in 2014/15 to become a "sustainable and vibrant entity".

### **Relevant Policies**

The main policies relevant to this proposal are:

Commitment 43 of the Programme for Government (PfG) - to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it. This is considered in more detail below.

Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning - was published on 7 October 2013. Among its key actions is placing a moratorium on any new or additional full-time provision or conversion from part-time to full-time (defined as over 4.5 hours) in advance of a review of the current levels of full-time provision, existing research and the needs of children being served by it. This proposal is compatible with the moratorium.

The Department has a statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-Medium Education. In accordance with the Review of Irish-Medium Education, registered Irish-Medium providers with sufficient children can be funded under the Department’s Pre-School Education Programme even where unfilled English-Medium provision is available in the area. This is considered in more detail below.

It is the Department’s practice not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. The potential impact of this proposal on existing provision is considered in more detail below.

### **Provision Levels**

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

The numbers of pre-school places and associated percentages are measured against the Year One enrolments for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

The analysis of provision below is based on the discontinuation of the 12 part-time funded places currently provided in the voluntary playgroup and the introduction of 26 part-time statutory places as proposed.

Consideration has been given to the total level of pre-school provision within the two and five mile radii of Naiscoil Na Daróige and, because Irish-Medium providers may enter the Pre-School Education Programme even where unfilled English-Medium provision is available in the area, to Irish-Medium pre-school provision specifically.

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

### **All Pre-school provision**

#### **Level of Pre-school Provision – two mile radius of Gaelscoil Na Daróige**

Year	Statutory places (f/t)	Non-statutory places (p/t)	Reception places	Total pre-school provision (ex reception)	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children statutory places in

<b>2014/15</b>	687	81	0	768	757	101.5%	7
<b>2015/16</b>	720	89	0	809	776	104.3%	9
<b>2016/17 As proposed</b>	746	77	--	823	776	106.1%	--

The level of provision within the two mile radius is already significantly higher than the planning figure of 95%, and indeed provides more than 100% provision in comparison to P1 places, suggesting over provision in the area. This is corroborated by the fact that underage children have accessed statutory funded pre-school provision in each of the last two years.

### **Level of Provision – five mile radius of Gaelscoil Na Daróige**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Statutory places (f/t)</b>	<b>Non-statutory places (p/t)</b>	<b>Reception places</b>	<b>Total pre-school provision (ex reception)</b>	<b>P1 places</b>	<b>Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)</b>	<b>Underage children in statutory places</b>
<b>2014/15</b>	1269	128	8	1397	1393	100.3%	34
<b>2015/16</b>	1310	150	█	1460	1461	99.9%	16
<b>2016/17 As proposed</b>	1336	138	--	1474	1454	101.4%	--

The level of provision within the five mile radius, which is also above the 95% planning figure, along with the number of underage children accessing statutory pre-school places each year, again suggests over provision in the wider area.

### **Irish-Medium Pre-school provision**

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

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

### **Level of Pre-school Provision – two mile radius of Gaelscoil Na Daróige**

Year	Statutory places (f/t)	Non-statutory places (p/t)	Reception places	Total pre-school provision (ex reception)	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2014/15	26	23	0	49	23	213%	█
2015/16	26	20	0	46	18	255.5%	0
2016/17 As Proposed	52	8	--	60	18	333.3%	--

### Irish-Medium Pre-school provision

#### Level of Pre-school Provision – five mile radius of Gaelscoil Na Daróige

Year	Statutory places (f/t)	Non-statutory places (p/t)	Reception places	Total pre-school provision (ex reception)	P1 places	Level of pre-school provision (%age of P1 places)	Underage children in statutory places
2014/15	52	23	0	75	43	174.4%	█
2015/16	52	20	0	72	41	175.6%	0
2016/17 As proposed	78	8	--	86	41	209.8%	--

In both the two and five mile radii, the level of provision is significantly above the planning figure of 95%, with the proposed figure in the two mile radius reaching over three times the number of primary 1 places, at 333.3%. This suggests that the proposal would lead to a high level of over provision of Irish-Medium pre-school places in the area.

### Applications to Irish-Medium settings

The table below shows the number of places available and the number of first preference applications received for admission to Irish-Medium pre-school settings within the two mile and five mile radii of Gaelscoil Na Daróige for the 2015/16 and 2016/17 school years:

Setting	Places available	1 <sup>st</sup> preference applications received 2016/17	1 <sup>st</sup> preference applications received 2015/16
<i>2 mile radius</i>			

Bunscoil Cholmcille	26	13	11
Naiscoil Cholmcille	8	5	7
Naiscoil Na Daróige	12	15	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>5 mile radius</i>			
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	26	32	27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>55</b>

In each of the last three years, Naiscoil Na Daróige has admitted every child who applied for a place at the setting, the highest enrolment was 17 children in 2014/15. This, combined with the data set out above, demonstrates that there is already sufficient IME pre-school provision in the area to provide a funded Irish-Medium pre-school place for every child whose parents want it.

It is likely, therefore, that the provision of additional pre-school places at the setting would lead to significant over provision in pre-school provision and, specifically, Irish-Medium pre-school provision in the area.

The Case for Change document would appear to suggest that over provision of Irish-medium provision in the area, and the resultant availability of funded Irish-Medium pre-school provision for pre-pre-school children may in fact be an intended outcome of the proposal, as, in setting out the perceived benefits of the proposal, the document refers to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta advice that parents send their children to a nursery setting for two years. Minutes of a Public meeting on 5 November 2015 regarding the proposal, provided along with the Case for Change document, also refer to 'more hours' being provided if statutory pre-school provision is approved.

### **Temporary Flexibility**

There have been a number of Temporary Flexibility requests approved for this area in the last two years. Within a two mile radius, one additional place was approved in 2014/15, and 29 in 2015/16. Within the five mile radius, five additional places were approved in 2014/15 and 41 in 2015/16. A full list is attached in Annex B.

No Irish-Medium pre-school providers in the area made a request for Temporary Flexibility in either of the last two years as none were oversubscribed.

### **NISRA local birth rates and population predictions**

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

- Birth statistics by academic year for all wards which fall at least partially within a 5 mile radius of Naiscoil Na Daróige indicate a slight increase of 1% children in the pre-school cohort between September 2016 and September 2018 admissions. (1393 for 2016, 1407 for 2018).



- Population projections for 3 year olds for the Derry council area predict a steady decrease of 148 (9.6%) children from 1,547 to 1,399 between 2017 and 2027.

These figures can, however, only be indicators of the future pre-school population and do not fully take into account population migration and other factors. On that basis they are not an exact predictor of demand. A list of the wards considered for the births statistics can be found in Annex C.

### **Education Authority Comments**

The EA considered the current provision within the Derry City area and noted that, at the present time, the numbers seeking Irish-Medium pre-school provision is in excess of the number of pupils entering Year 1 Irish-Medium Primary Schools in the area. The Western Area PEAG indicated that the numbers currently enrolled in the non-statutory pre-school provision would not provide for conversion to a feasible 26 part-time place Statutory Nursery.

### **ETI Comments**

The ETI has advised that it does not support the development proposal because there is adequate Irish-Medium pre-school provision in the surrounding area. It states that enrolment trends are not sufficient to sustain a 26-place nursery unit. ETI also raised concerns regarding the potential displacement of good quality voluntary pre-school settings and uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the proposed nursery unit given the availability of other local provision in Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir.

ETI state that there is adequate statutory and voluntary pre-school provision in the surrounding area and that the creation of a third nursery unit is likely to lead to over provision of pre-school places.

### **Financial Implications**

Places in the voluntary/private sector are funded on a per place basis (currently £1801 per annum) and allocated on an annual basis by PEAG taking account of the number of statutory pre-school places available and their assessment of demand.

If a statutory nursery unit is opened at Gaelscoil Na Daróige, the requirement for recurrent funding, including additional places which may remain vacant or utilised by non-target age children, will transfer from the Pre-School Budget to the Aggregated Schools Budget.

### **Irish Medium Provider's Comments**

The Department has received correspondence from the Board of Governors of Naiscoil Dhoire and Bunscoil Cholmcille regarding the Naiscoil Na Daroige Development Proposal during the 2 month consultation period. The letter is written by Sean MacCionnaith, the Principal of the school.

Mr MacCionnaith notes that the total number of Irish-Medium pre-school places in the city area already significantly exceeds the intake in Year 1 of Irish-medium primary level providers and explains that, despite the best efforts of the Irish-Medium sector, demand for Irish medium education provision in the city is insufficient to support the current providers in the area, without adding additional provision.

He explains that the overall increase in demand has been 34 places over the last 17 years across all three providers and states that current providers have not been able to appropriately fill the places currently available. He claims that it would be counterproductive to the aims of the Irish-Medium sector to further increase the level of Irish-Medium pre-school provision in the area at this time.

### **Impact on other provision**

The Department's practice in considering development proposals which have sought to move pre-school provision from the non-statutory sector to the statutory sector has been not to displace existing good quality pre-school provision in the area.

The creation of a statutory Irish-Medium nursery unit could potentially increase the number of underage children who will take up statutory places in the area, not just at Gaelscoil na Daróige, but potentially in other settings in the area, as the sector is currently under-subscribed. ETI, EA and another Irish-Medium provider in the area have also raised this concern.

### **Summary of Key Points**

- The level of provision in both the two and five mile radii indicates that there is significant over provision within the Irish-Medium sector.
- There is no evidence that additional places requested are required to meet demand for Irish-Medium provision in the area. If additional places were required, both statutory and voluntary providers in the area have capacity to cater for additional children.
- All children in the area, whose parents wanted an IM place and remained in the admissions process to the end, were offered an IM pre-school place in 2014/15 and 2015/16.
- It is the Department's practice not to displace existing good quality provision with alternative provision of a different management type.
- The EA, ETI and another Irish-Medium provider in the area oppose the proposal and have set out significant concerns about it.

### **Early Years Team Conclusion**

Based on the evidence and information available, the Early Years Team does not support the development proposal that a 26 part-time place Irish-Medium statutory nursery unit be established at Gaelscoil Na Daróige from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

The case for change and available data on enrolments and demand, does not sufficiently evidence the need for additional Irish-Medium pre-school provision in the area, and both statutory and non-statutory IME providers in the area have capacity to provide additional Irish-Medium places should such a need arise in future. The

creation of a statutory Irish-Medium nursery unit as proposed could result in high levels of over provision of Irish medium pre-school provision in the area, potentially displacing current good quality provision in the area and/or increasing the number of underage children accessing statutory pre-school places.

## Annex A

### List of the providers within one and two mile radii

#### 2 mile

2116023 The Academy NS  
2116266 Bligh's Lane NS  
2116267 Carnhill NS  
2116336 Galliagh NS  
2116345 Belmont NS  
2036227 St Paul's PS, Slievemore  
2036472 Holy Family PS, Ballymagroarty  
2010380 Londonderry Model PS  
2016071 Greenhaw PS  
2030364 Rosemount PS  
2030381 Holy Child PS, Londonderry  
2036084 Steelstown PS  
2036142 St Brigid's PS, Carnhill  
2036555 St Eugene's PS, Londonderry  
2036574 Bunscoil Cholmcille  
2036473 St Eithne's PS, Ballymagroarty  
2036581 St Patrick's PS, Pennyburn  
2052035 Groarty PS  
2036032 St John's PS, Bligh's Lane  
2036069 St Anne's PS, Derry  
2036461 St Therese's PS, Lenamore  
2046687 Gaelscoil Na Daroige  
2AB0040 St Bernadette's Playgroup  
2AB0043 Rainbow Child and Family Centre  
2BB0511 Na;scoil na Darøige  
2AB0045 St Joseph's Community Playgroup  
2AB0071 Naiscoil Cholmcille  
2AB0571 Pennyburn Community Playgroup

#### 5 mile

2116232 Strathfoyle NS  
2116233 Lisnagelvin NS  
2116348 Trench Road NS  
2010382 Ebrington Controlled PS  
2012261 Newbuildings PS  
2016124 Ashlea Primary  
2016564 Fountain PS  
2030373 Nazareth House PS  
2032212 Glendermott PS

2036288 Good Shepherd PS  
 2036475 Longtower PS  
 2036533 Hollybush PS  
 2046646 Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir  
 2066558 Oakgrove Integrated PS  
 2012052 Culmore PS  
 2012095 Ballougry PS  
 2012227 Drumahoe PS  
 2016203 Lisnagelvin PS  
 2036143 St Oliver Plunkett PS, Strathfoyle  
 2036247 St Columba's PS, Newbuildings  
 2036259 Sacred Heart PS, Trench Road  
 2036465 Chapel Road PS  
 2AB0620 Tiny Tots Community Playgroup  
 2BB0448 Drumahoe Community Playgroup  
 2BB0565 Chapel Road Community Playgroup

## Annex B

### List of all approved Temporary Flexibility requests

Ref No	School	2014/15
2116336	Galliagh NS	1
2036475	Longtower PS	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>

		2015/16
2116345	Belmont NS	1
2036472	Holy Family PS, Ballymagroarty	8
2010380	Londonderry Model PS	1
2030364	Rosemount PS	8
2036084	Steelstown PS	1
2036142	St Brigid's PS, Carnhill	1
2030373	Nazareth House PS	1
2036475	Longtower PS	1
2036533	Hollybush PS	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

## List of the wards considered for the births statistics

Ward  
 Altnagelvin  
 Ballynashallog  
 Beechwood  
 Brandywell  
 Carn Hill  
 Caw  
 Clondermot  
 Creggan Central  
 Creggan South  
 Crevagh  
 Culmore  
 Ebrington  
 Enagh (Derry  
 LGD)  
 Foyle Springs  
 Holly Mount  
 Kilfennan  
 Lisnagelvin  
 New Buildings  
 Pennyburn  
 Rosemount  
 Shantallow East  
 Shantallow West  
 Springtown  
 Strand (Derry  
 LGD)  
 The Diamond  
 Victoria (Derry  
 LGD)  
 Westland

### (1) List of all approved Temporary Flexibility requests

Ref No	School	2014/15
2116336	Galliagh NS	■
2036475	Longtower PS	■
	<b>TOTAL</b>	■

		2015/16
2116345	Belmont NS	■
2036472	Holy Family PS, Ballymagroarty	8
2010380	Londonderry Model PS	■
2030364	Rosemount PS	8
2036084	Steelstown PS	■
2036142	St Brigid's PS, Carnhill	■

2030373	Nazareth House PS	█
2036475	Longtower PS	█
2036533	Hollybush PS	█
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

**(2) List of the wards considered for the births statistics**

Ward  
 Altnagelvin  
 Ballynashallog  
 Beechwood  
 Brandywell  
 Carn Hill  
 Caw  
 Clondermot  
 Creggan Central  
 Creggan South  
 Crevagh  
 Culmore  
 Ebrington  
 Enagh (Derry  
 LGD)  
 Foyle Springs  
 Holly Mount  
 Kilfennan  
 Lisnagelvin  
 New Buildings  
 Pennyburn  
 Rosemount  
 Shantallow East  
 Shantallow West  
 Springtown  
 Strand (Derry  
 LGD)  
 The Diamond  
 Victoria (Derry  
 LGD)  
 Westland

**Education and Training Inspectorate comment**

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

NAÍSCOIL NA DARÓIGE: ETI INSPECTION FINDINGS

The report of the original inspection of Naíscoil na Daróige in 2012 indicated an inadequate overall conclusion.

The most recent follow-up inspection report, in February 2014, evaluated the Naíscoil na Daróige as good.

In the interim period, following the original 2012 inspection, there was action planning for improvement, support from Altram and the appointment of a new leader, development of appropriate policies and procedures and very good leadership to take forward developments of the provision for a pre-school programme and to raise standards.

At the time of the follow-up inspection, one area identified for improvement was:

“to develop further the quality of the staff’s interactions with the children in order to extend the children’s learning.”

GAELSCOIL NA DARÓIGE: ETI INSPECTION FINDINGS

In relation to Gaelscoil na Daróige, the school was inspected in November 2009 and, subsequently, entered the formal intervention process. However, in November 2013, the follow-up inspection conclusion was satisfactory. By June 2014, at the time of the second follow-up inspection, the Gaelscoil had improved to good.

At the time of the last inspection in June 2014, the enrolment was low and stood at 60.

The report conclusion was as follows:

“In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is now good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The follow-up inspection has identified the need for the principal to continue to embed the well-developed processes for monitoring and self- evaluation. The ETI will continue to monitor the school’s progress in this area.”

“It continues to be important that the employing authority, 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.”

ETI KNOWLEDGE

There is adequate statutory and voluntary pre-school Irish-medium provision in the surrounding area.

#### RATIONALE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ETI EVIDENCE

The ETI does not support the displacement of a good voluntary pre-school setting, as it is the most viable form of pre-school provision at the Gaelscoil because the enrolment trends are not sufficient to sustain a twenty-six place nursery unit.

In addition, there are two Irish- medium nursery units within a two to three-mile radius and a third nursery unit is likely to create over provision of pre-school places.

#### MATTERS ARISING OR FURTHER QUERIES BY ETI

Based on the inspection evidence and ETI knowledge, there are issues not addressed adequately in the development proposal which the DE and the Education Authority need to consider and address, they are:

1. the sustainability of the potential nursery unit given the low enrolment trends in both the Naíscoil and gaelscoil; and
2. the potential displacement of the good quality of provision in the Naíscoil in favour of a nursery unit given that there are two, alternative Irish- medium nursery units within a two to three-mile radius, that being, Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir.

#### ANY OTHER RELVANT INFORMATION

The map of the provision in the surrounding area of Gaelscoil na Daróige shows at least two other Irish-medium nursery units in close proximity i.e. Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir.

#### RECOMMENDATION

The ETI does not support the development proposal because of the potential displacement of a good quality voluntary pre-school setting and there is uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the proposed nursery unit given the availability of other local, nursery unit provision in Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir.