

CASE FOR CHANGE – Supporting Information**SUMMARY / OVERVIEW**

AREA PLANNING DISTRICT	Mid Ulster
DP NUMBER	DP 599
PROPOSER	The Church of Ireland Derry Diocesan Board of Education
SCHOOL(S) NAME	Desertmartin Primary School
SCHOOL REFERENCE	304-2162
TYPE	Primary School
MANAGEMENT	Other Maintained
DP PUBLICATION DATE	Week commencing 18 November 2019
PROPOSAL	Proposal to discontinue Desertmartin Primary School with effect from 31 August 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter

STATUTORY CONSULTATION

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

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

<p>PROPOSER</p> <p>Provide detail of consultation with the BOGs, teachers and parents of the affected school(s) – dates of meetings/letters. Good practice suggests all staff (including non-teaching) should be consulted as well as pupils</p> <p>Summary and assessment of views received – how were these taken into account before the publication of the DP?</p>	<p>The Derry Diocesan Board of Education asked the Education Authority, on its behalf, to undertake the pre-publication consultation. Meetings took place with the Board of Governors, Staff and Parents on 3 December 2018. Upon completion of the 4 weeks' consultation with the staff, governors and parents, the responses were considered by the Derry Diocesan Board of Education, including an additional response received directly to the Derry Diocesan Board of Education.</p> <p>A total of 23 responses were received. Ten responses agreed with the proposal and emerging themes included increased opportunities for children in larger schools, low numbers and value for money. Thirteen responses disagreed with the proposal and emerging themes included focus on finances rather than quality of education, the process and roles of the Education Authority, Trustees and Derry Diocesan Board of Education. The preferred option of the Board of Governors is a Jointly Managed Faith School. A full summary of the consultation responses is included in Appendix B.</p>	
<p>Confirmation by the Proposer</p>	<p>I confirm that the school's Board of Governors, staff and parents/guardians were consulted and Equality Screening of the proposal has been carried out and the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (where appropriate) have been considered.</p> <p>NAME: ROBERT SMILLER</p> <p>SIGNED: </p>	<p>OFFICE HELD: ARCHDEACON OF DERRY ARCHBISHOP'S COMMISSARY FOR DERRY + LAPHOE</p> <p>DATE: 16 SEPT 2019</p>

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

EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTARY ON PRE-PUBLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

<p>THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY</p>	<p>I confirm that the schools which the EA consider might be impacted by this proposal were consulted on 18 September 2019.</p> <p>NAME: Kim Scott</p> <p>OFFICE HELD: (Acting) Director of Education</p> <p>SIGNED: </p> <p>DATE: 14 November 2019</p>
<p>Provide detail of consultation with schools that may, in the EA's opinion, be affected by the proposal - list of schools, dates of letters issued to schools/meetings.</p> <p>Summary of views received (number of responses, recurring themes, petitions, community support or opposition).</p> <hr/> <p>Responses/Assurances in respect of issues raised during consultation.</p> <hr/> <p>Dates of EA meetings e.g. Education Committee/ Board etc.</p> <hr/> <p><u>Details of issues raised by members of EA Board</u></p>	<p>In accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, a copy of the proposal was sent on 18 September 2019 to schools which, in the opinion of the Authority, might be affected by the proposal. A total of 26 local schools which might be affected by the proposal were forwarded correspondence. Comments were invited from the Boards of Governors and Trustees, to be returned to the Education Authority by 16 October 2019.</p> <p>Three responses were received.</p> <p>The emerging themes/comments from the responses received included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental choice and the education of the 'whole child' should be at the centre of any consideration of sustainability of a school. • The financial position of the school appears to be of priority, regardless of the quality of education and experience of the pupils. • The shared education programme between Desertmartin Primary School and Knocknagin Primary School is extremely extensive and unique in its character and should be commended. • Knocknagin Primary School and Desertmartin Primary School have a vibrant shared education programme and continue to be an example to all other partnerships. It has helped to create a more inclusive and friendlier local community. • It would be a mistake to lose the expertise of the teachers in the local area as they offer so much to their children, especially those with special educational needs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desertmartin Primary School provides a safe and nurturing environment for their children. The smaller setting allows for children to flourish and develop. <p>This development proposal was discussed by the Education Authority's Education Committee at its meeting on 14 November 2019.</p>
<p>EDUCATION AUTHORITY COMMENTS In the context of planning on an area basis - what is the EA's view of the proposal, taking into account any pre-publication consultation. Does the EA support the proposal?</p> <p>NAME: Kim Scott</p> <p>OFFICE HELD: (Acting) Director of Education</p> <p>SIGNED: </p> <p>DATE: 14 November 2019</p>	<p>The Education Authority, supports Development Proposal No 599 to discontinue Desertmartin Primary School with effect from 31 August 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>In consideration of the above, and the Case for Change, the Education Authority is proposing to publish Development Proposal No 599 during the week commencing 18 November 2019.</p>

1 Background

Desertmartin Primary School is located in a small village near Magherafelt, on a site totalling 0.128 hectares.

The school has a current enrolment of 11 pupils, with an approved enrolment figure of 48 and an admissions number of 7 pupils. Due to the demographics in the area there has been a reduction in the enrolment number over the last number of years. There is no indication this number will increase, and no evidence it can reach 105 pupils as required by the Department of Education's (DE's) Sustainable Schools Policy 2009.

Over the past number of years, Desertmartin Primary School's enrolment has remained low. Table 1 shows the historical and current enrolment figures.

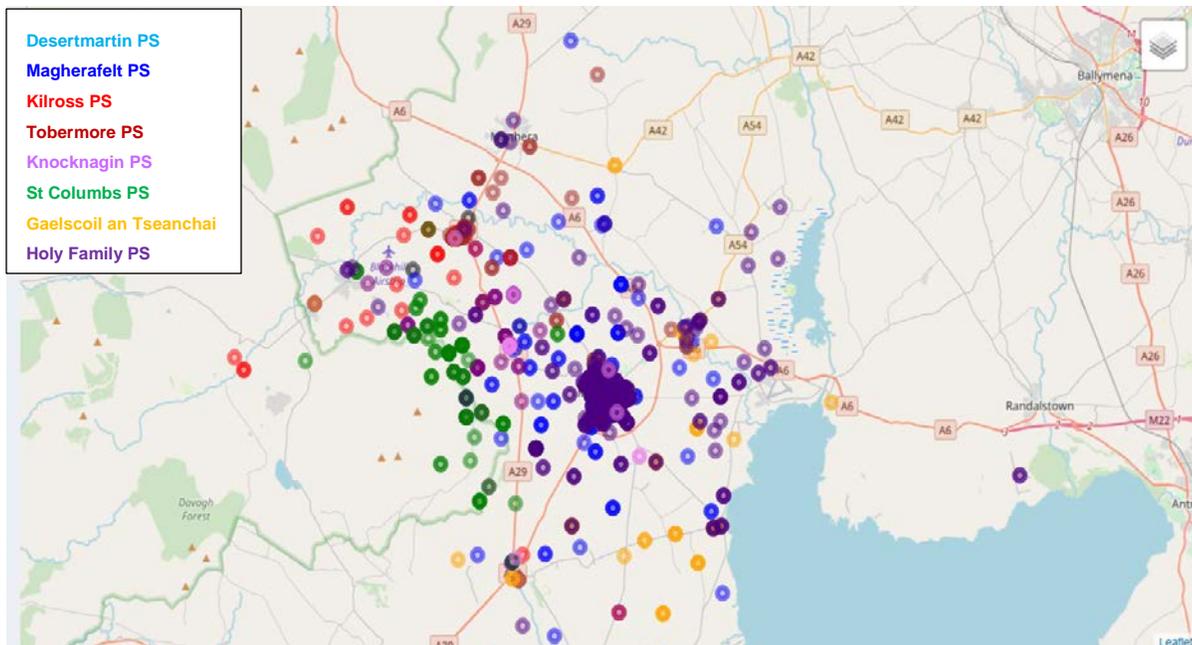
Table 1: Enrolment Statistics								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total (Y1-Y7)
2009/10	7	2	4	8	5	3	4	33
2010/11	5	7	1	3	7	5	3	31
2011/12	4	4	6	1	2	6	5	28
2012/13	0	4	4	6	1	2	6	23
2013/14	3	0	4	4	6	1	1	19
2014/15	2	3	1	2	3	8	0	19
2015/16	2	2	4	2	2	3	8	23
2016/17	4	2	2	4	3	2	3	20
2017/18	1	3	2	2	4	2	2	16
2018/19	1	1	2	2	1	4	2	13
2019/20(source: school)	0	1	1	2	2	1	4	11

The enrolment statistics show that the school population numbers have declined since 2009 resulting in only 11 pupils currently enrolled at the school. The school received no year 1 pupils for 2019.

In ensuring that children have access to an appropriate education, there is a sufficient level of available pupil places in nearby schools to accommodate the children from Desertmartin (see Table 2). Due regard has also been taken of rural needs and the transport section within the Education Authority will meet the needs of children in accordance with transport policy.

Table 2: Local Schools - Distance from Desertmartin Primary School					
	Distance (miles) From Desertmartin Primary School	Sector	Enrolment 2018/19	Approved Enrolment Number 2018/19	Available Places 2018/19
Tobermore Primary School	3.7	Controlled	57	130	73
Kilross Primary School	3.7	Controlled	38	112	74
Magherafelt Primary School	3.9	Controlled	249	290	41
Knockloughrim Primary School	4.5	Controlled	116	105	-11
Maghera Primary School	6.5	Controlled	99	163	64
Knocknagin Primary school	1.0	Maintained	70	75	5
St Columb's Primary School	2.6	Maintained	85	113	28
Gaelscoil tSeanchai	3.6	Irish Medium	133	120	-13
Spires Integrated Primary School	4.3	Integrated	204	203	-1
Holy Family Primary School	3.8	Maintained	612	622	22

The distribution map 1 below shows the pupil distribution for Desertmartin Primary School and the nearest schools.



Upon analysis of the information, there are a sufficient number of available places in the alternative schools, guided and determined by parental preference. In terms of the existing catchment, there are a number of children within the Desertmartin area already attending alternative local schools with sufficient available places to accommodate pupils from Desertmartin.

In consideration of the distance of the local schools, home-to-school transport arrangements will be implemented within transport regulations, and based on eligibility.

2 Sustainability Assessment

The main focus of the Area Planning process is embedded in the Sustainable Schools Policy first published in 2009 and applies to primary and post-primary schools. The policy outlines the criteria that school managing authorities should consider when making decisions affecting the best use of resources in order to deliver an excellent education to children and young people. The policy sets out 6 sustainability criteria, and associated indicators, which are identified as the key references for assessing existing and future education provision to ensure it adequately meets the needs of pupils.

2.1 Quality of Education

The last ETI inspection in Desertmartin Primary School was April 2015, with the quality of education assessed as Good. The inspection identified an area for improvement which the school demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

In an extract from the report it was noted that:

'It will be important that the employing authority, the school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.'

Whilst the quality of education has been classified as 'good' and there are obvious benefits of small classes, there are also challenges for schools and staff in managing composite classes with more than two year groups, and providing opportunities for wider interaction amongst their peer group including engagement in extracurricular activities and team-based experiences. However, in the context of Desertmartin Primary School and its partnership with Knocknagin Primary School all pupils engage in shared classes weekly, ranging from 2 sessions per week in foundation stage to approx. 25% of their time in KS1&2. This includes extracurricular activities, which complements what is available in the school.

Desertmartin has two teachers with composite classes for Years 1-4 and Years 5-7. Following retirement a new Principal was appointed in September 2017.

2.2 Stable Enrolment Trends

The enrolment in Desertmartin Primary School has been diminishing over a number of years (see Table 1). The current enrolment at September 2019 is 11 pupils which is well below the recommended levels for a primary school as per the Sustainable Schools Policy (105 pupils), which will provide further challenges in relation to composite classes and finances.

2.3 Sound Financial Position

Under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Common Funding Formula, the level of funding is determined by pupil numbers. In a declining enrolment it is more challenging to live within the budget allocation. In the most recent three year plan the deficit is projected to increase from -171.90% to -2804.13%. A school which cannot operate within the + /- 5% threshold will face challenges due to pupil numbers. Desertmartin Primary School is not operating within the annual budget allocations, resulting in the deficit continuing to grow year on year.

2. 4 Strong Leadership and Management

There are committed governors and staff in providing leadership and management within the school. There has been a significant change in leadership in August 2017 when the Principal post became vacant. A new principal has been appointed and took up post in September 2017.

2. 5 Accessibility

The school is situated in a rural community, with the majority of pupils coming from the immediate area.

In ensuring that children have access to an appropriate education, there is a sufficient level of available pupil places in nearby schools to accommodate the children from Desertmartin (see Table 2). Due regard has also been taken of rural needs and the transport section within the Education Authority will meet the needs of children in accordance with transport policy.

2. 6 Strong Links with the Community

Desertmartin Primary School is a Church of Ireland other maintained school so has had a long established link with the parish Church, with shared use of facilities when required. There is a great sense of support from older members of the community who have a historical connection with the school.

Over the last 10+ years the school has, as ETI described it, been “*a leader in Shared Education*” and there is a significant shared education link with Knocknagin Primary School. This involves shared classes for all pupils Years 1-7 each week and close working relationships between staff. As the project has become more embedded, (eg through events like joint Sports Day) relationships have grown between parents from both schools and between parents and staff in partner schools. Pupils in both schools now also have the opportunity to attend after schools activities in either setting.

The school has a high proportion of pupils who are receipt of Free School Meals, so has also accessed funding for a variety of activities from the Extended Schools Programme

3 Area Planning Impact

The desired Area Planning outcome will be to provide the best educational opportunities for children to ensure that they may reach their full potential.

As detailed in 2 above, Area Planning is focused on the Sustainable Schools Policy. In October 2016, in the publication of the draft Education Authority’s Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for School provision 2017-2020, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir, MLA, stated:

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

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

In primary schools pupils should be in a class with no more than two year groups but ideally they should be in single year group classes. They should be able to interact with peer groups and have the best chances to prepare for successful transition to post primary school. However there are still a significant number of schools that are struggling, for a wide range of reasons, to deliver the best for their pupils. This is particularly evident in the primary sector and, despite the best effort of teachers, it becomes harder to deliver a high quality education if pupils are taught in composite classes. We have too many small primary schools with more than two year groups in a single class.'.

The proposal aligns with the key themes of Area Planning. The Area Plan for Northern Ireland aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs in sustainable schools within a diverse system of education. It sets out the key priorities and objectives in providing access to a network of sustainable schools for the Education Authority, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other sectoral bodies in the light of Department of Education policy, in particular the need to raise standards and close the attainment gap through a network of sustainable schools. The focus of the plan is on the educational best interests of children and young people.

Since 2011, statutory planning authorities and school managing authorities have been engaged in implementing the objectives of the Sustainable Schools Policy through Area Planning. The first four objectives are:

- ensure that the excellent quality of education available to some young people is made available to all, in both urban and rural settings, in accessible, modern, fit-for-purpose accommodation;
- improve outcomes for all but, in particular, to provide additional support to those who require it, including those children with special educational needs, to realise their full potential;
- encourage schools to co-operate in sharing best practice to support children with special educational needs and those with other barriers to learning;
- sustain strong, successful and viable schools, well-led by their governors representing local stakeholders, principals and their staff, to be the centre of the education system, supported by effective administrative and strategic direction;

The Education Authority Area Plan, 'Providing Pathways,' projects that the population (age 0–15 years) is to increase by 0.8% by 2024. Across Mid Ulster, within the controlled sector, there are 1,482 available places in primary schools. At a local level, the key issues and challenges for the Mid Ulster council area relate to:

- Ensuring that school places are located as required
- Addressing school provision where sustainability is an issue.

Within the 2018/19 Action Plan, the Trustees agreed to develop options for future provision in Desertmartin Primary School by March 2019.

In both cases, as above, within the alternative schools (all within an approximate 7 mile radius) there are approximately 282 available places. Therefore, all pupils from Desertmartin Primary School can be accommodated.

During the initial consultations that took place between Education Authority officers, the Derry Diocesan Board of Education and the Board of Governors, it was important to explore options relating to No Change, Shared Education, Federation, Amalgamation or Discontinuance. In order to best explore the options, a meeting was held with representatives of the Board of Governors and a representative of the Derry Diocesan Board of Education and the options explained and discussed. In particular this related to the

Jointly Managed option. Further time was given for the Board of Governors to consider the options and to offer evidence for further consideration and/or exploration. The Transferors Council have recently (December 2018) re-engaged with the Catholic Trustees and the discussions are ongoing, however, there is no final agreed ethos document and although progress has been made, there has been no significant change that would alter the view of the Derry Diocesan Board of Education that the proposal for discontinuance should be the preferred option.

3.1 Do Nothing

This option would result in no change to the current provision. In consideration of the Annual Action Plan, the downturn in enrolment numbers and the school's financial position, do nothing is not an option.

3.2 Jointly Managed School

A Jointly Managed Church School (JMCS) is a grant-aided school, providing shared education with a Christian ethos, with Trustee representation agreed by the Transferor churches and the Catholic Church and managed by a Board of Governors with balanced representation from both the main communities here.

This JMCS option was explored due to the very positive and co-operative relationship between Desertmartin Primary School and Knocknagin Primary School. There were a number of very positive meetings locally between the schools and representatives from the Church of Ireland and CCMS. The meetings included discussion of practical issues and a 'fact finding trip' to Liverpool where a similar structure operates.

It was recognised that the governance and management of a JMCS requires an overarching ethos document, agreed between the four main church traditions at a central level. Work on this document is currently on-going, with revisions being invited from the four main church traditions. Once finalised, the agreed statement will then form the basis of any future JMCS projects in Northern Ireland. Whilst this is the preferred option of the Board of Governors, this is also not achievable within a timescale that is going to contribute to the sustainability of Desertmartin Primary School.

3.3 Shared Education

The Education Authority has a duty to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education. However, a shared solution would not improve the sustainability of Desertmartin Primary School.

3.4 Federation

A federation would involve local schools coming together either through a soft federation or hard federation. A soft federation would provide each school with its own governing body, own budget, with representatives on a joint committee. The schools would share a Principal, common goals, joint committee recommendations but it would be up to the individual governing bodies to authorise decisions/plans. A hard federation would provide for a single governing body with common goals and while each school would receive individual budgets, these could be used to pool budgets across the schools in the federation. In considering a federation, the sustainability of a federated school within the local area would not provide for a sustainable provision.

3.5 Amalgamation

As with the options above, sustainability and location of the school, amalgamation was not an option for the school.

3.6 Discontinue

In considering the future of Desertmartin Primary School, all of the options for the school did not provide a sustainable provision for the school. The commitment of the governors and Principal is recognised, but the current circumstances would not provide a sustainable school for pupils currently attending Desertmartin Primary School.

Therefore, the Derry Diocesan Board of Education recommends that Desertmartin Primary School discontinues with effect from 31 August 2020.

4 Rationale for Proposal

Desertmartin Primary School has always been a small primary school with an enrolment over the past number of years not exceeding 25 pupils. The school was identified in the Annual Action Plan 2018/19, identified as a school provision where 'sustainability is an issue' with the action, 'Trustees to develop options for future provision of Desertmartin Primary School by March 2019'.

In September 2018, the school had one pupil starting in Year 1 and there are no first preferences for September 2019. This will place increased pressure on the financial resources of the school and also on the teaching staff.

Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 places a statutory duty on the EA to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and designing and delivering public services. The areas from which Desertmartin Primary School attracts pupils is, according to the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group, defined as rural. The discontinuance of Desertmartin Primary School will have an impact on the local area. The provision of home-to-school transport will mitigate against this impact and provide for the safe transportation of pupils from the area to their nearest school. Transport will be provided for children who meet eligibility criteria.

The Education Authority has to consider the needs of people in rural areas as laid down in the Rural Needs Action (NI) 2016. The Act requires the Authority to have due regard to the impact of any strategies or plans it intends to implement on a rural community. The area from which Desertmartin Primary School attract pupils from are, according to the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group, defined as rural therefore the Authority must take "due regard".

The level of 'regard' that is 'due' will depend on the circumstances and, in particular, on the relevance of rural needs to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact for people in rural needs, the greater the regard required by the duty.

The Act defines 'rural needs' as "the social and economic needs of rural areas". In general terms, a need can be considered to be something that is essential to achieve a standard of living comparable with that of the population in general. For example, it can relate to the ability to access key public services such as health and education, the ability to access suitable employment opportunities, and the ability to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle.

In the case of any proposed action at Desertmartin Primary School the Derry Diocesan Board of Education have to consider the likely impact of modifying / removing all types of provision from the area.

The removal of other maintained provision from the Desertmartin area would not have a detrimental impact on the local community, with options for alternative provision in the surrounding area (see Table 2). The Education Authority will provide transport in accordance with the transport policy.

5 Educational impact

A school with an enrolment of 11 pupils is unsustainable both from an educational and financial perspective. There is no indication that this pattern of enrolment will change in the near future or that Desertmartin Primary School can avail of effective jointly managed shared education or partnership working arrangements that will increase sustainability. Given the declining enrolment the financial position can only deteriorate further. Should Desertmartin Primary School be discontinued, it is the view of the Derry Diocesan Board of Education that this action will contribute to school improvement. Children will have better opportunities to engage in education and the broad curriculum in larger classes, mixing with their peers. Account should be taken of all children who would move and particularly the impacts on those with Special Needs. Whilst no current Stage 5 pupils are enrolled there is a high percentage of pupils attending the school with Special Needs and on the Code of Practice Stages 1-3. Such special needs provisions may be enhanced in a larger school with teachers responsible for one area of co-ordination eg SENCO, which will not be the case in schools with 2 teachers who have to fulfil a number of roles and carry many curriculum responsibilities.

6 Implementation Plan (If the Proposal is approved)

The Education Authority is required to publish a Development Proposal outlining the proposed changes to a school. This proposal is being brought forward by the Derry Diocesan Board of Education under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986. The views expressed in this consultation will be forwarded to the Education Authority's Education Committee as part of publishing a Development Proposal.

The timetable, for the consultation process is detailed below:

Table 3: Development Proposal Timeline	
Proposal: Discontinue Desertmartin Primary School with effect from 31 August 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter	Proposed Timeline
Consultation with Governors, Staff, Parents - Pre-publication consultation meeting	3 December 2018
Consultation with Governors, Staff, Parents Pre-publication consultation questionnaire Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority on behalf of the Derry Diocesan Board of Education	14 May 2019 – 11 June 2019
Responses compiled by the Education Authority for consideration by the Derry Diocesan Board of Education	June/July/August 2019
Submission of proposal by the Derry Diocesan Board of Education to the Education Authority requesting publication of a Development Proposal	4 September 2019
Education Authority to undertake consultation with other affected Schools (4 weeks) Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority	18 September – 16 October 2019
Education Committee to seek Approval To Publish Case for Change to be taken to the November 2019 Education Authority's Education Committee for consideration If approved to publish, a Development Proposal will be published in the local newspapers which begins the start of a two month statutory objection period	14 November 2019

Statutory Objection Period (2 months)	Week commencing 18 November 2019 (2 months)
Objections/Comments to be forwarded to the Department of Education	
Await Ministerial/Department of Education Decision	February/March 2020
Implementation	
If approved, the Development Proposal would take effect from 31 August 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.	

7 Resource implications

The proposal is for the discontinuance of Desertmartin Primary School. As there are currently unfilled places within the local schools, there will be no requirement for additional accommodation to facilitate the relocation of pupils. There will be a cost saving in the recurrent costs of operating a school.

Finance The operation cost of Desertmartin Primary School will be a cost saving from this proposal.

Staffing The teaching staff is afforded employment protection under the School Re-organisation Agreement 2013/2 for two years. The non-teaching staff will be afforded employment protection for one year. The Education Authority will meet with staff to discuss options should the development proposal be approved and an action plan implemented for the discontinuance of the school.

Transport Any transport arrangement will be in accordance with transport regulations and identified preference school, based on eligibility.

Accommodation No accommodation requirements.

Primary School Annual Area Profile 2018

DE Ref No	School Name	Status	Council Area
3042162	Desertmartin Primary School	Other Maintained	MID ULSTER

Annual Census Information			
Year	Total pupils Y1-Y7	IMU	FSME %
2014/15	19	0	31.6
2015/16	23	0	47.8
2016/17	20	0	60.0%
2017/18	16	0	75.0%
Approved Reception-Year 7 enrolment number			48
Approved Reception-Year 7 admissions number			7
Year 1 Pupils 2017/18			1
First Preferences Applications 2017/18			1

Formal Intervention	
In formal intervention any period 1 April 2017-31 March 2018	

Budgets			
Year	Available Delegated Resources £	Surplus/Deficit £	Surplus/Deficit %
2014/15	140,766	-18,329	-13.02%
2015/16	120,603	-46,077	-38.21%
2016/17	107,669	-63,834	-59.29%

KEY TO SYMBOLS & TEXT USED IN DATA ABOVE	
Symbol/Text	Definition
*	Relates to fewer than 5 cases
#	Means that a figure greater than or equal to 5 had been treated to prevent disclosure of a small number elsewhere
-	School not open in the relevant academic year
n/a	No year 7 pupils

APPENDIX B – Summary of consultation responses

The Derry Diocesan Board of Education agreed to initiate pre-publication consultation with the Board of Governors, staff and parents of Desertmartin Primary School, and with the Trustees and Managers of other schools likely to be affected by the proposal **to discontinue Desertmartin Primary School with effect from 31 August 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.**

Before arriving at the final recommendation on the future primary provision at Desertmartin Primary School, the Church of Ireland Derry Diocesan Board of Education sought the views of those most directly involved at a local level. The Education Authority were invited to support the Derry Diocesan Board of Education and sought objections and/or other comments on its behalf, in the pre-publication consultation process with the Board of Governors, parents and staff of Desertmartin Primary School and Trustees, Board of Governors and other interested parties in the local community.

The tables below indicate the number of responses which AGREE and DISAGREE with the proposal to discontinue Desertmartin Primary School with effect from 31 August 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Table 1 – Agree with the Proposal

Agree with the proposal	10 (3 Desertmartin parents, 4 Desertmartin residents and 3 Knocknagin parents)
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Emerging themes	
1	Will increase social interaction for the children. A lot of the children are from the same families and are therefore children are only interacting with family members.
2	The school is not utilised in the rural area.
3	7 plus staff required to look after 14 pupils, the ratio means the school is expensive to fund and it is felt that public money could be better spent.
4	Increased opportunities for pupils in larger schools.
5	The shared education programme isn't working as much as it is portrayed.
6	Impossible to find agreement not only between Catholic and Protestant Churches but also the other faiths who deserve to be recognised.
7	The ratio of pupils within Knocknagin and Desertmartin is overwhelmingly uneven.

Table 2 – Disagree with the Proposal

Option 2 – Disagree with the proposal	13 (1 Board of Governors, 3 Governors, 6 Desertmartin parents, 1 teaching staff, and 2 Knocknagin parents)
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	Emerging themes
1	Parental choice and the education of the ‘whole child’ should be at the centre of any consideration of sustainability of a school.
2	The financial position of the school appears to be of priority, regardless of the quality of education and experience of the pupils. The funding formula is suggested to be flawed.
3	Suggestions that the Area plan is not an actual plan.
4	Criteria for school closures should be set by an independent body not EA.
5	No evidence for Derry Diocesan Board of Education’s right to bring forward a DP. Both DE circular 2017/19 and DE’s “Area Planning – Frequently asked questions” indicate the most usual people to bring forward a DP would be EA, CCMS or school BOG. Neither document makes reference to any other authority for “other maintained” schools so it seems reasonable to assume from that it should have been the BOG initiating a DP process if they felt it was required.
6	If Derry Diocesan Board are entitled to bring forward a DP there has been no engagement at all with BOG, staff or parents which is contrary to procedures in DE circular 2017/19, section 8.1 where those bringing forward a DP are to gain understanding of the local context.
7	A sense of lack of caring as anyone with any power to make decisions have made no attempt to interact with anyone at the school to discuss their views. Lack of updates with developments in the process, parents feel like they have been kept in the dark.
8	Concern that on 3 December 2018, EA and the Church of Ireland were willing to issue a consultation document in the name of the Trustees of Desertmartin Primary School, however, the identity of those trustees was not known until late March/early April 2019. This means the consultation began without the identity of those trustees being known even though it was written in their name.
9	Closure will have a significant negative impact on community relations in and around Desertmartin. Closing the only Protestant School can only have a detrimental effect on the village, as it will deter young families from moving to, or staying in the village.
10	Damaging to the Knocknagin Primary School community. It removes the opportunity from parts of the local population to have their children educated in the village, but also robs children from Knocknagin of the opportunity to be educated alongside others from a different background.
11	Significant proportion of blame for current low numbers on the Bain report as all small schools were perceived as closing.

12	There is concern that as all schools under 105 pupils are said to be unsustainable, the two closest controlled schools in the area are also significantly under 105, therefore their future is also uncertain.
13	Implications of potential closure on the significant proportion of pupils in the school with SEN – many children, particularly those on the autistic spectrum, cannot thrive in a large crowded environment and a school with fewer children in a less busy environment is more beneficial to their educational development. Parents need reassurance that their children are going to be learning in an environment that suits and meets their needs.
14	Concerns of SEN pupils becoming school refusers in a very large and unfamiliar setting. One size doesn't fit all.
15	Lack of acknowledgement of the shared education programme.
16	The ETI has described the partnership between the two schools as a leader in shared education, given the colossal amount of money that has been poured into this project, it is financially a huge waste to abandon the project at this point.
17	The Shared education programme is extremely extensive. The only other school in the area that would allow for such a good shared education programme would be spires Integrated Primary School. They are currently oversubscribed which suggests demand for a proper shared education like a Jointly Managed Faith School (JMFS) could be high.
18	The only alternative controlled school which is currently over the Bain review recommended minimum enrolment for rural school of 105 and isn't oversubscribed is Magherafelt Primary school.
19	Funding for shared education makes a valuable contribution towards enhancing the opportunities for pupils in both schools. Closure of Desertmartin will have a detrimental effect on Knocknagin Primary School as they would lose access to valuable funding.
20	The psychological impact of the news of the closure has been very upsetting for children, especially those at a younger age.
21	How much work has the Derry of Diocesan Board of Education/Education Authority done to ensure the ethos document would be completed in a timely manner such that the JMCS could have been implemented and therefore the sustainability of Desertmartin would not need to have been discussed.
22	In relation to JMFS, there have been no regular updates or meetings in recent years.
23	Concern regarding transportation of children to new schools. While there is a bus running to Magherafelt Primary School, there are no buses to closer schools.