



Dumfries and Galloway Council
Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing

Consultation Report: August 2025

**Report on the outcome of the consultation relating to the proposal
to discontinue education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary
School**

This document has been issued by Dumfries and Galloway Council in regard to a proposal in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Contents

1.0	Summary Proposal	3
2.0	Reasons for this proposal	3
3.0	Introduction	3
4.0	Background	4
5.0	Impact Assessment	5
6.0	Consultation Process	5
7.0	Pupil Engagement	7
8.0	Responses to the Consultation Exercise	9
9.0	Education Scotland Report	15
10.0	Compliance with Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010	16
11.0	Alleged Omissions or Inaccuracies	20
12.0	Opportunity to Make Representations to the Scottish Ministers	20
13.0	Conclusion	21
14.0	Recommendation	22

Appendices

1	Proposal Paper
2	Impact Assessment Summary and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)
3	Written Responses
4	Public Meeting Note
5	Pupil Engagement
6	Education Scotland Report

1.0 Summary Proposal

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process, to discontinue education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School which is currently mothballed and re-align its catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School.

It is proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be discontinued with effect from 1 December 2025.

2.0 Reasons for this proposal

This is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:

- St Ninian's RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for nineteen months (correct March 2025), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in Dumfries and Galloway has fallen by 34% between the census' of 2011 and 2022.
- Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and Principal Teacher for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment. The annual cost of mothballing the building is £7,039.28.

This document has been issued by Dumfries and Galloway Council Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. This document has been prepared by the Council's Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate with input from other Council Directorates.

3.0 Introduction

This consultation report is prepared in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide a record of the total number of written responses made during the statutory consultation period;
- Provide a summary of the written responses;

- Provide a summary note of oral representations made at the public meeting held on Tuesday 15 April 2025 at 6pm;
- Provide a statement of Dumfries and Galloway Council's response to those written and oral representations;
- Provide the full text of Education Scotland's report and a statement of Dumfries and Galloway Council's response to this report;
- State how Dumfries and Galloway Council reviewed the proposal following the representations received during the statutory consultation period and receipt of the report from Education Scotland;
- Provide details of any omission form, or inaccuracy in the proposal paper and state how Dumfries and Galloway Council has complied with sections 11A to 13 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010; and
- Explain the opportunity that may arise to make representations to the Scottish Ministers in connection with Section 15(4) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

4.0 Background

At Education and Learning Committee on 29 June 2023, Members were recommended to mothball St Ninian's RC Primary School from August 2023. This was following discussion with families with regard to the most appropriate education for their children. There were a number of contributing factors:

- The Headteacher position for St Joseph's RC and St Ninian's RC had been advertised on five occasions, with no applications received.
- The school roll for academic year 23/24 was anticipated to be eight.
- There were no suitable applications for the vacant Principal Teacher position

Agreement was reached with the parents that it would be appropriate to mothball St Ninian's RC from August 2023 with the pupils transitioning to other schools. Officers and Headteachers worked with families to ensure effective transition for all pupils and staff.

Education and Learning Committee – 29 June 2023 – Item 12 – Transformation Update – Partnerships and School Management Arrangements

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=5752&Ver=4>

Following engagement with the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School, Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 10 December 2024 were presented with the preliminary requirement document satisfying the requirements of phase one of the Statutory Consultation timeline. There is no requirement for an authority that is formulating an urban school closure proposal to satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 before starting to prepare its proposal paper, this phase is for rural school closure only. However, Dumfries and Galloway Council feel the inclusion of this phase is important for all schools and the communities they serve, therefore it has been included in the process for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Members agreed to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure

of St Ninian's RC Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee – 10 December 2024 – Item 11 – Statutory Consultation – St Ninian's RC Primary School

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6132>

Full details of the proposal, reasons for the proposal, the reasonable alternatives to the proposal that were identified, an assessment of the proposal and each of the reasonable alternatives, and an assessment of the educational benefits to the proposal and each of the alternatives are set out in the Proposal Paper which is attached at Appendix 1.

5.0 Impact Assessment

Dumfries and Galloway Council has undertaken an impact assessment and a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA), to ensure that any barriers or discrimination that might affect the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School are highlighted, ensuring we meet our statutory duties under the Equality Act including the Fairer Scotland Duty.

The summary impact assessment and CRWIA documents are attached at Appendix 2 and available on Dumfries and Galloway Council's website - <https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/council-elections/data-finance-performance/equality-diversity/impact-assessments#:~:text=An%20impact%20assessment%20is%20a,people%20in%20Dumfries%20and%20Galloway>.

The impact assessment identified four positive impacts (Age, Religion or belief, Human Rights and Children's Rights). Three negative impacts (Age, Religion and Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Management). Whilst there were negative impacts, on balance with the information provided in the Proposal Paper specifically the educational benefits statement the positives for pupils and staff outweighed the potential negatives.

6.0 Consultation Process

Following engagement with the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School, Education and Learning Committee on 10 December 2024 were presented with the preliminary requirement document satisfying the requirements of phase one of the Statutory Consultation timeline. There is no requirement for an authority that is formulating an urban school closure proposal to satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 before starting to prepare its proposal paper, this phase is for rural school closure only, however Dumfries and Galloway Council include this phase in all consultations ensuring early and transparent engagement for all communities and stakeholders.

Members agreed to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

The Proposal Paper was made available on Dumfries and Galloway Council's website:

www.dumgal.gov.uk/consultations

A summary of that document was also provided to the following consultees:

- a. The Parent Council of St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- b. The Parents/carers of pupils within the current St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area;
- c. The Parents/carers of pupils attending St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- d. The parents/carers of any children expected to attend St Ninian's RC Primary School or St Joseph's RC Primary School within two years of the date of publication;
- e. The pupils of St Joseph's RC Primary School (considered to be of a suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal);
- f. The staff (teaching and other) at St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- g. Trade union representatives;
- h. Cairnryan Community Council, Kirkmaiden Community Council, Lochans Community Council, Stoneykirk Community Council, Stranraer, Ochtrellure and Belmont Community Council, Castle Kennedy Community Council, Cree Valley Community Council, Isle of Whithorn Community Council, Kirkcowan Community Council, Kirkmabreck Community Council, New Luce Community Council, Old Luce Community Council, Port William and District Community Council and Royal Burgh of Wigtown and District Community Council;
- i. Parish Priest, Fr William R. McFadden
- j. Crichton Campus Leadership Group (Dumfries and Galloway Council, Dumfries and Galloway College, South of Scotland Enterprise, Scottish Funding Council, SRUC Barony College, University of West of Scotland, Glasgow University, Open University, NHS Dumfries and Galloway);
- k. Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland;
- l. Chief Executive, NHS Dumfries and Galloway;
- m. Area Commander Dumfries and Galloway, Fire Scotland.

The Proposal Paper and summary document along with key dates were shared via email with Education Scotland, Ward 1 and 2 Elected Members and Dumfries and Galloway Council Ward Officers.

A hard copy of the full Proposal Paper was also made available at the following locations:

- DG Customer Services, Newton Stewart
- Ryan Centre, Stranraer
- Dumfries and Galloway Council Headquarters

The document was made available in alternative formats or languages as requested.

The consultation period ran from 10 March 2025 to 9 May 2025 at 5pm, which is over the minimum requirement of at least 30 school days, as required by Section 6(4) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

A public meeting was held at Penninghame Primary School on 15 May 2025 at 6pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate was welcome to do so. Advanced notice of this meeting was sent to all consultees in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and advertised in the local press, The Galloway Gazette and the Free Press. The meeting was convened by Dumfries and Galloway Council Officers from the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing directorate supported by an Officer from Planning and Development (Economy and Infrastructure Directorate). The reason for bringing the proposal forward were presented followed by an opportunity for questions, discussions and comments. A summary note of this meeting is attached at Appendix 4.

This Consultation Report is Dumfries and Galloway Council's response to the issues raised regarding the proposal during the consultation exercise. It will be published on Dumfries and Galloway Council's website for a period of no less than three weeks prior to the final consideration of the proposal at Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 9 September 2025.

7.0 Pupil Engagement

The proposal to close St Ninian's RC Primary School could have an impact on pupils, parents/ carers and the local community. Pupils' views are a significant part of the consultation process. To that regard, where possible pupils from the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area took part in focus groups alongside their peers at both Penninghame Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary School, with a Quality and Improvement Officer from the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing directorate.

The focus group at St Ninian's RC Primary School consisted of eight pupils from Primary 3 to Primary 7, including two pupils who previously attended St Ninian's RC Primary School, and was held on 30 April 2025.

The focus group at St Joseph's RC Primary School consisted of six pupils from Primary 4 to Primary 7 and was held on 30 April 2025.

Primary pupils at both Penninghame Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary School, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, were given information regarding Dumfries and Galloway Council's proposal. Pupils were offered an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas through a series of questions and have these recorded as part of the consultation process.

Pupils in the focus group held at Penninghame Primary School said:

- “Easy for the teachers to get round everybody, less children in class.”
- “Teachers are really nice here, they help you with your work.”
- “Everyone is nice, teachers deal with anything that goes wrong.”
- “The way that classes are organised, we work with lots of different people and mix together.”
- “Lots of resources in a bigger school, access to lots of materials, games and equipment, art resources. You wouldn’t have this in a small school.”
- “More people, more chances to make friends with more people.”
- “Bigger classes mean that there are more people to work with, more choices of where and who to sit with.”
- “Big schools are more busy. Some people don’t like it when it is too busy.”
- “Harder to ‘get your turn’ – more people might be in-front of you.”
- “If there were less people in school and then people moved the small school might get closed down. You’d have to move and make new friends – more changes.”
- “Wouldn’t have the chance to make as many friends.”
- “It could be sad for the children that went there.”
- “It feels the same here at Penninghame, just more people here.”
- “Happy that other children have come here. Gives us more children to talk and play with.”
- “Gives children from the smaller school an opportunity to be part of something bigger and busier.”
- “Need to think about what should happen to the building. Can we use it at Penninghame? We could extend the Learning Centre, it could become a ‘quiet’ place in school with chairs, blankets for us to have time out of class, it could be a library area or an indoor play area.”

Pupils in the focus groups held at St Joseph’s RC Primary School said:

- “We respect everyone’s rights – we are going for Rights Respecting School’s Gold Award.”
- “Pupil Groups help ‘get things done in and around school. We have Pupil Council, Enterprise and Eco Groups. Eco focuses on litter picking, taking care of area. Enterprise organise events like smoothie making.”
- “More opportunity in a bigger school to make teams for football & netball. We have football, netball and other clubs after school like art and knitting.”
- “Opportunity to meet more people and make more friends. To talk to more people.”
- “Being bigger, with more children in school helps us become independent, we do more for ourselves and we look after others.”
- “Some people might like a smaller school, smaller numbers.”
- “Easier for teachers – there would only be a small group of children to teach.”
- “You’d get to know everyone really well, you’d be really close to them.”
- “You might be the only person in the year group. This would make it difficult if you were the only P7 moving to secondary school.”
- “Much more difficult to do any activities – not enough people to make teams for games, would make PE and after-school clubs very hard to play.”
- “Would be less parents, so less volunteers and helpers for breakfast club, after-school clubs, summer fete.”
- “Not sure if it is a good idea. If children want a catholic education they would have to move school, meet new people.”

- “It would be a very long drive morning and afternoons to come to St Joseph’s RC.”
- “That would be a good choice, bigger school so more opportunities and more people to socialise with.”
- “Our school numbers would go up. It would help the number of children learning in a catholic education.”
- “We would love to have children from St Ninian’s. We would be kind, respectful and welcome them.”
- “Think about how we keep our catholic schools open. It is a long way from Stranraer to Dumfries.”

A summary of the pupil focus group response is attached at Appendix 5.

8.0 Responses to the Consultation Exercise

There were eight representations received during the consultation period, six were received via the online survey and two via email. Six of the eight redacted representations can be viewed in full at Appendix 3. Two respondents did not give consent for their written response to be made publicly available therefore their written response is not included within Appendix 3. Their summarised responses are detailed below.

Respondent number 3 submitted that they were in support of the closure of St Ninian’s RC Primary School and their preference would be for the St Ninian’s RC Primary School catchment area to be realigned with St Joseph’s RC Primary School.

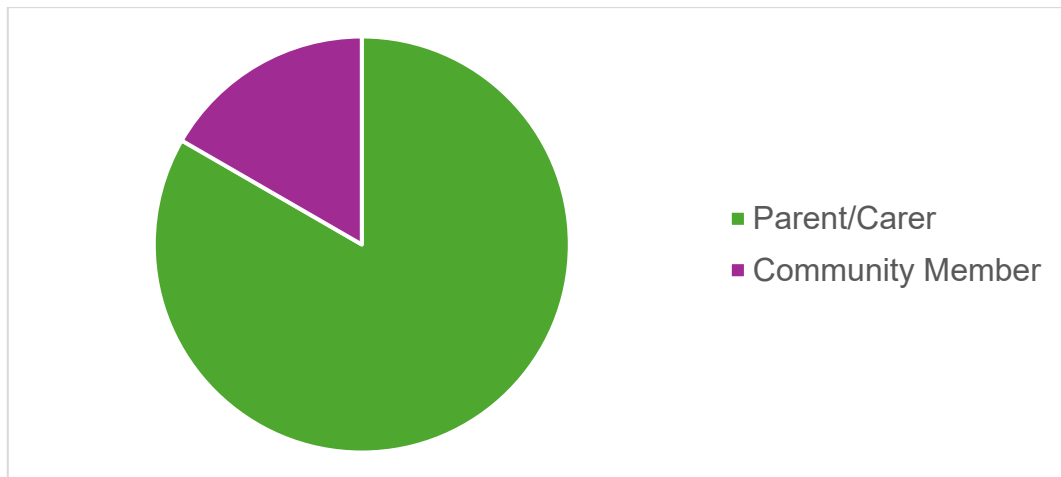
Respondent number 4 submitted that they were in support of the closure of St Ninian’s RC Primary School and their preference would be for the St Ninian’s RC Primary School catchment area to be realigned with St Joseph’s RC Primary School. They stated that the felt the school roll was not viable and that children need social skills and a broad education.

8.1 Online Survey Responses

An online survey was made available for the duration of the consultation period. All consultees were made aware of this survey and the other means by which representation could be made. A paper format of the online survey was made available at the public meeting and alongside the hard copy Proposal Papers, locations as detailed in Section 6.0. Dumfries and Galloway Council received two further representations via email.

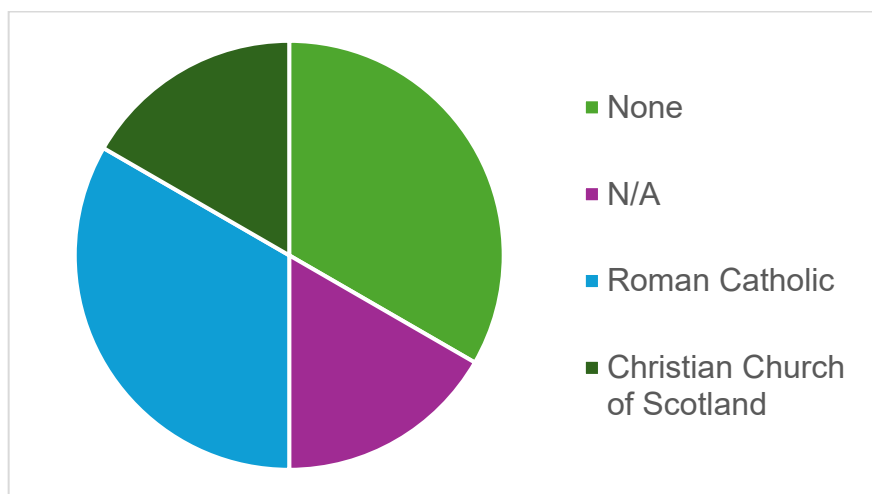
There were 6 responses to the online survey during the consultation period (a blank copy of this survey and responses for which permission was granted for publication are available at Appendix 3. A summary of the survey is detailed below;

What is your relationship to the school?



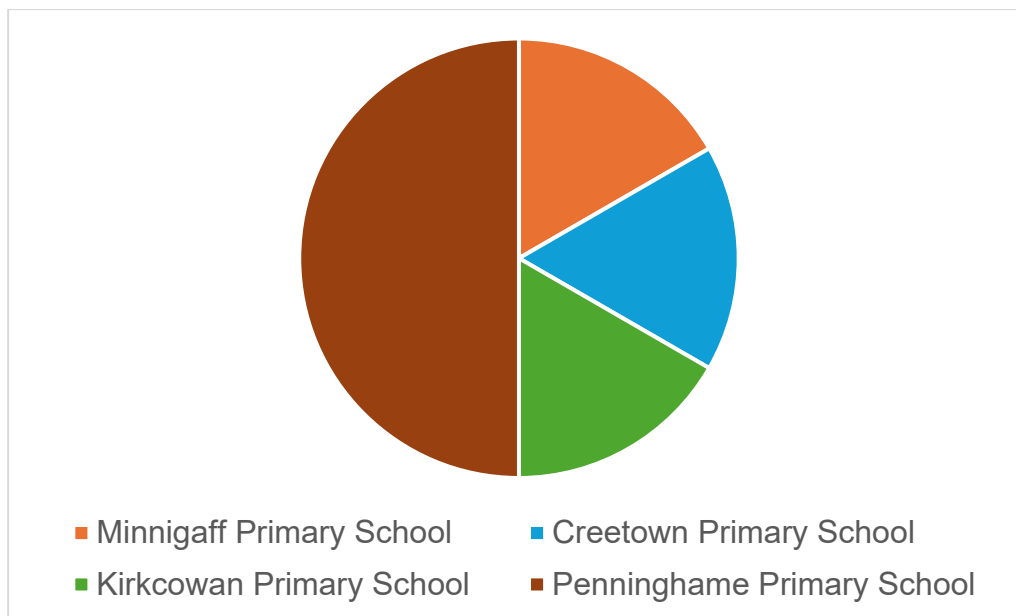
The majority of respondents (five) identified themselves as parents/carers with one member of community also making representation. The five parents/carers that responded to the survey represented three primary aged children, two nursery aged children.

What is your present religion, if any?



Of the six responses received via the online survey two people identified themselves as Roman Catholic. There were a further two email responses from the Catholic Church.

Which catchment area do you live in?



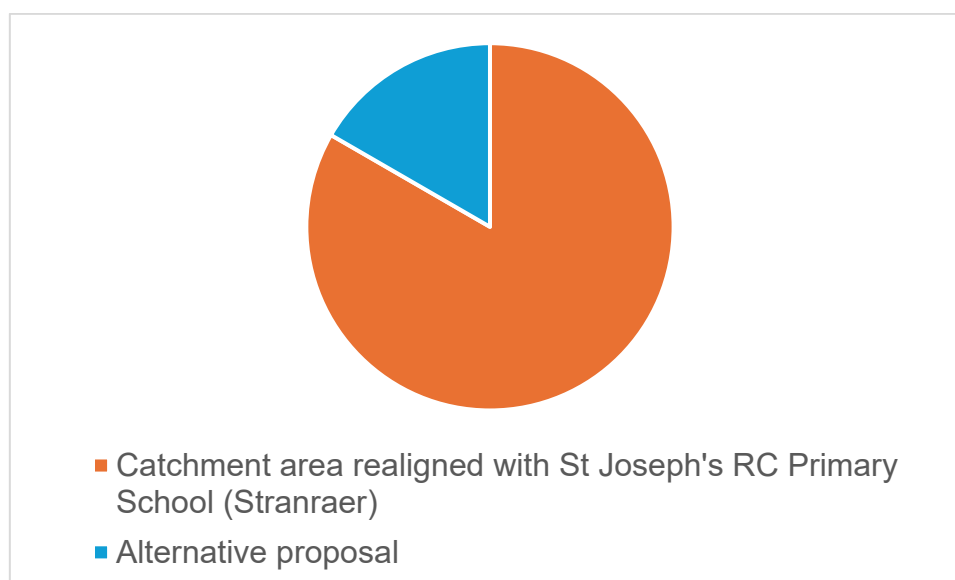
All respondents to the survey live within the catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School. St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area is made up the catchment areas of the following non-denominational schools; Creetown Primary School, Garlieston Primary School, Kirkcowan Primary School, Kirkinner Primary School, Minnigaff Primary School, Penninghame Primary School, Port William Primary School, Whithorn Primary School and Wigtown Primary School. The majority of respondents (three) live within the Penninghame Primary School catchment area.

Do you support the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School?



Almost all respondents, including the two responses received via email were supportive of the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School. Only one respondent was not in favour, their reason was due to their being a lack of choice over schools.

If the closure on St Ninian's RC Primary School goes ahead, the proposal is that the denominational catchment area will be realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer), there will be no changes to any other catchment areas. Do you support this change in catchment area, or do you have an alternative proposal that Dumfries and Galloway Council should take into consideration?



Respondents were in the main in favour of the catchment area being realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School. One respondent was not in favour due to not having access to a car and was not supportive of a young child being on a bus to Stranraer.

8.2 Roman Catholic Church Responses

Two email representations were received on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, both redacted representations can be found at Appendix 3 of this report.

Both representations are supportive and have no objections to the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School. However, one representation requests a formal statement;

*"We would therefore expect that within the formal process that there is a clause **formally** stating the right of any Catholic family, either resident now or in the future, to receive Catholic Religious Education including where necessary Sacramental preparation."*

In response to the above request Dumfries and Galloway Council recognises that there are a small number of children who are baptised through the Roman Catholic Church that reside within the catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School. If these children wish to attend St Joseph's RC Primary School they will be supported with transport in line with Dumfries and Galloway Council's School Transport Policy. It is recognised that the travel distance involved are not insignificant and Dumfries and Galloway Council will therefore endeavour to support families in the Roman

Catholic education of their children including where necessary Sacramental preparation, recognising the challenges around the recruitment of Roman Catholic teachers.

8.3 Public Meeting

Oral responses to the proposal were gathered at the public meeting convened by Officers from the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate and was held at Penninghame Primary School on 15 May 2025 at 6pm. The meeting was attended by one members of the local community along with one local Councillor. An Officer from Planning and Development (Economy and Infrastructure Directorate), the Headteacher of Penninghame Primary School and a representative from Education Scotland were also in attendance.

A note of the public meeting is attached as Appendix 4.

8.4 Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate's Response to Written/Oral Representations

Questions and statements received through the representations made through the consultation period fell into three main themes: future use of the building, capacity pressure and active travel routes/access to Penninghame Primary School. Due to the low number of representations received, some of the comments below have been taken from the feedback received during the preliminary requirements phase to ensure the thoughts of the wider community are captured and responded to as part of this process.

Future use of the building

Comment/Statement: The building should be part of Penninghame Primary as they are limited in space and would be a great space for them to utilise.

Comment/Statement: Gets added on to Penninghame primary school with classes already bursting at the seams

Response: Penninghame Primary School during academic year 2024/25 operated at 94% efficiency with 59 pupils in attendance not at their catchment school. Penninghame Primary School remains sufficiently large enough for the number of children living within the catchment area. Classes are arranged in line with Regulation 2 of the Education (Lower Primary Class Sizes) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010, inserted an amendment into Section 3 of the Education (Lower Primary Class Sizes) (Scotland) Regulations 1999, which set the new lower statutory class size maximum of 25 in all single stage P1 classes. Class size maxima in P1-P3 single stage classes are governed by the aforementioned regulations and Local Authorities are required to take account of these as well as the class size maxima set by national agreement in teachers' terms and conditions of service.

Primary 1: 25 pupils

Primary 2-3: 30 pupils

Primary 4-7: 33 pupils

Composite class: 25 pupils

Comment/Statement: Could St Ninians school be turned into a support base or school for those with additional support needs? There isn't enough support for people with additional support needs in the area and this could help to provide that support

Comment/Statement: The building would be a massive asset to Penninghame Primary School. A excellent place for a learning centre. That would give the school more space which it needs.

Response: Following the outcome of the statutory consultation, officers will consider all potential uses for the St Ninian's RC Primary School building, taking into consideration comments received from consultees throughout the process.

Comment/Statement: Transfer to Newton Stewart Initiative to replace the nearby "Newton Stewart Centre" building, or sell off and return some funds to Council reserves.

Comment/Statement: The building must be used and not allowed to deteriorate or be vandalised (it is in a conservation area)

Response: The process for community asset transfer is set out on Dumfries and Galloway Council's website - <https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/council-elections/have-your-say/step-by-step/transfer-asset-community-organisation-step-step>

Local Ward Officers are available to support groups through this process.

Capacity Pressure

Comment/Statement: There is not enough space at Penninghame to allow all children in NS [Newton Stewart] to attend from 2 years old.
We would rather attend St Ninian's RC Primary. There is no choice.

Response: Dumfries and Galloway Council works closely alongside the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers to ensure Early Learning and Childcare is accessible. Penninghame Primary School and Minnigaff Primary School both have nurseries within Newton Stewart. The nursery at Minnigaff Primary School is run by a partner provider and delivers funded and non-funded places from two years of age. St Ninian's RC Primary School has never operated a nursery facility.

Loss of active travel options/access to Penninghame Primary School

Comment/Statement: For it to have any other use, it would limit access to the school, as Penninghame has a number of access points to the school.

Comment/Statement: If it was to close. There would be no access for Penninghame school other than Auchendoon road which is bedlam at the best of times. The other 2 entrances relieves some pressure on the traffic and parking.

Comment/Statement: By selling this asset privately we would be closing off 2 access points to the school, meaning safely walking to school for many children wouldn't be possible.

Response: If the decision to close St Ninian's RC Primary School is granted and the building declared surplus, Dumfries and Galloway Council officers will work to ensure travel routes into Penninghame Primary School meet the needs of the community in particular pupils accessing the school.

9.0 Education Scotland Report

In accordance with Section 8(2) of the 2010 Act, a report was produced by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal.

In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 15 April 2025 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of St Joseph's RC Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

The Education Scotland report is attached in full at Appendix 6.

This report is supportive of the proposal and its findings can be summarised as follows:

- a. HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits to Dumfries and Galloway Council's proposal to permanently close St Ninian's RC Primary School and re-align the catchment to St Joseph's RC Primary School.
- b. Falling school rolls mean that this change is largely accepted by stakeholders as a way to continue to provide an option for Catholic education in the area. St Joseph's RC Primary School have capacity and would welcome any children whose parents or carers wish them to go to a denominational school from the area.
- c. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should continue to liaise with stakeholders, including the Catholic Church, regarding its implementation.

Stakeholders at Penninghame Primary School should be included in discussion about the future use of the site.

9.1 Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate's Response to Education Scotland Report

Dumfries and Galloway Council welcomes the report from Education Scotland and agrees with its findings.

The Education Service's response to the findings contained within the Education Scotland Report is as follows:

- a. HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits to Dumfries and Galloway Council's proposal to permanently close St Ninian's RC Primary School and re-align the catchment to St Joseph's RC Primary School.

Dumfries and Galloway Council agrees that the educational benefits of the proposal for current and future pupils are clear. The benefits for pupils ranges from the children receiving a more diverse curriculum and wider range of high- quality learning experiences, to the development of self-management, social intelligence and innovation skills. The learning environment of St Joseph's RC Primary School would also offer pupils the opportunity to experience the broader life of the school, through a wider range of pupil committees and community links, to be involved in project based and interdisciplinary learning within and across stages, as well as wider opportunities for personal achievement and involvement.

As a consequence of this proposal, the catchment of St Ninian's RC Primary School would be linked with the catchment of St Joseph's RC Primary School. Should pupils select to attend St Joseph's RC Primary School they would have greater opportunities to participate in a wider range of educational experiences and activities which are of significant educational benefit. The broader, more diverse pupil body supports greater social and emotional development and opportunities to develop extended friendship groups and peer support networks.

- b. Falling school rolls mean that this change is largely accepted by stakeholders as a way to continue to provide an option for Catholic education in the area. St Joseph's RC Primary School have capacity and would welcome any children whose parents or carers wish them to go to a denominational school from the area.

Dumfries and Galloway Council recognises that there would be an increased journey time for those eligible catchment pupils wishing to attend St Joseph's RC Primary Schools, there would also be an increased cost in providing transport to the Council. To date there have been no requests from families living within the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area for their children to attend St Joseph's RC Primary School.

- c. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should continue to liaise with stakeholders, including the Catholic Church, regarding its implementation.

Stakeholders at Penninghame Primary School should be included in discussion about the future use of the site.

Dumfries and Galloway Council will work with the local communities to consider the next steps for the St Ninian's RC Primary School building. There has been recent interest from local groups to take on the building for the benefit of the wider community.

10.0 Compliance with Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

After Dumfries and Galloway Council received Education Scotland's report, officers carried out a further review of the proposal following the close of the consultation period, having regard (in particular) to:

- Written representations received by Dumfries and Galloway Council (from any person) during the Consultation period;
- Views of St Joseph's RC Primary School and Penninghame Primary School pupils as gathered during the consultation exercise,
- Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting, and
- Education Scotland's report.

The feedback from the Consultation was considered by Dumfries and Galloway Council officers. Data and factual information were checked where required and advice sought from other Dumfries and Galloway Council directorates where necessary. This ensured that the Council met the requirements to review the proposal under Sections 9(1) and 13(5) of the 2010 Act.

Dumfries and Galloway Council officers carried out a further assessment of the proposal and each of the reasonable alternatives to it as set out in the Proposal Paper. The preliminary requirements report identified three options:

- a. Re-open St Ninian's RC Primary School
- b. Continued Mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School with the temporary catchment of St Joseph's RC Primary School
- c. Closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School and Realign the catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School, Stranraer (the proposal)

Dumfries and Galloway Council has reviewed the Educational Benefits Statement that was prepared (see Section 8 of the Proposal Paper at Appendix 1). That review has concluded that the educational benefits, and effects as identified therein are still valid, and that there are positive educational benefits to be derived from all relevant groups (pupils in particular) should education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be permanently discontinued. The consultation feedback received has not led Dumfries and Galloway Council to the view that it is necessary to reconsider that Educational Benefits Statement.

On the basis that pupil numbers are currently zero, with low numbers of children baptised in the Roman Catholic Church residing within the catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School (data received from the baptismal records from the parishes of Sacred Heart, St Martin and St Ninian and Our Lady and St Ninian); it has therefore been assessed that the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School is still considered to be the best option to address the underlying reasons for the Proposal.

Dumfries and Galloway Council has listened carefully to the points made by stakeholders at the public meeting and have considered equally carefully the Education Scotland report, the written representations received during the consultation phase and the preliminary requirements phase. As set out above, the Proposal has been reviewed to consider whether any of the consultation feedback has led the Education Service to reconsider any other options as being reasonable alternatives to the Proposal.

This review has concluded that;

Education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School shall be permanently discontinued with effect from 1 December 2025; and the catchment area of St Joseph's RC Primary School be extended to subsume the catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

The below diagram (Figure 1) therefore sets out the new proposed catchment area for St Joseph's RC Primary School.

Figure 1



Formal closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School, and the potential declaration by Dumfries and Galloway Council of a surplus property may allow for consideration of any plans to acquire the building to be progressed by the local community, which in turn would increase the availability of assets to the community.

Education Scotland's report is supportive of Dumfries and Galloway Council's proposal being implemented.

Dumfries and Galloway Council has had regard to the points made at the public meeting, the written consultation responses and Education Scotland's report. It thereafter carried out a review of the Proposal and all the reasonable alternatives and has concluded that the Proposal should be implemented with the catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School realigned to St Joseph's RC Primary School. Implementation of the Proposal will allow children to have access to increased learning opportunities, wider experiences and better socialisation through being part of a school with larger pupil numbers. The current number of children from within the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area wishing to attend St Ninian's RC Primary School is insufficient to make the school viable. If the school were to remain mothballed this would be a continuing drain on the Council's resources and against

the communities wishes to seek clarity on the position of St Ninian's RC Primary School. Implementation of the Proposal will assist Dumfries and Galloway Council to deliver 'Best Value' through making more efficient and effective use of its resources. Furthermore, Dumfries and Galloway Council will engage with the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School to explore options for future use of the school building should they wish to explore this.

11.0 Alleged Omissions or Inaccuracies

Section 10(3) of the 2010 Act places a requirement on Dumfries and Galloway Council to provide details of any inaccuracy or omission in the Proposal Paper which has either been identified by Dumfries and Galloway Council or raised by consultees. This provision also requires Dumfries and Galloway Council to provide a statement on the action taken in respect of the inaccuracy or omission, or if no action was taken, to state that fact and why.

In the course of the statutory consultation, there were no areas identified by the respondents as being inaccurate or omitted from the Proposal Paper.

Dumfries and Galloway Council would like to take the opportunity to update the information regarding the date as published in the Proposal Summary to consultees dated 10 March 2010. It was stated

"It is proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be discontinued with effect from 1 September 2025."

This date is incorrect and should have stated; It is proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be discontinued with effect from 1 December 2025. All further references to the discontinuation date were accurately reported.

12.0 Opportunity to Make Representations to the Scottish Ministers

If at the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee a closure decision is taken, Dumfries and Galloway Council shall notify the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of that decision and publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. Dumfries and Galloway Council would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and why it has been satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal. As detailed in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Statutory Guidance, Section 4.6 Denominational Schools Paragraph 149;

"As a safeguard for the continued provision of denominational education in denominational schools, authorities must submit for Ministerial consent proposals which fall to be considered under section 22C and 22D of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. The 2010 Act revoked sections 22A and 22B, but left sections 22C and 22D untouched. Specific criteria apply in both sections before a proposal would fall to be considered:-

- *Section 22C requires an education authority to submit for Ministers' consent a proposal which, if implemented, will have the effect that all or some of the pupils who attend the school will no longer receive school education in a denominational school, or that all or some of the children who would, but for the implementation of the proposal, have been likely to receive their education in a denominational school will not receive education in a denominational school. Ministers must not grant consent under section 22C unless satisfied that adequate arrangements have been made for the religious instruction of pupils and children who would, as a result of implementation of the proposal, no longer receive or be likely to receive school education in a denominational school."*
- *Section 22D requires an education authority to submit for Ministers' consent a proposal which relates to a change to a denominational school e.g. closure or amalgamation, where the church or denominational body concerned disagree with the proposal. After consultation with the authority and the church or denominational body, if Ministers are satisfied that the proposal if implemented would result in a significant deterioration for pupils in the local authority area (or to pupils belonging to the area of any other authority) in the provision, distribution and availability of school education in denominational schools compared with the provision, distribution and availability of school education in other public schools, consent to the proposal must be withheld.*

150. Ministers will consider such a referral separately to their call-in powers under the 2010 Act and, if required, grant or withhold consent to a closure proposal under sections 22C or 22D of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of 8 weeks to call in any closure decision made by Dumfries and Galloway Council's Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate in certain circumstances. This 8 week timeframe would consist of an initial 3 weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the Ministers, and a further 5 weeks for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether to issue a call in notice. During this period Dumfries and Galloway Council will not proceed to implement any closure decision.

If the Scottish Ministers call in a closure proposal, it is referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels. The Convener must constitute a School Closure Review Panel within 7 days for determination. Dumfries and Galloway Council may not implement a closure decision in whole or in part until the Panel has made its determination. It will usually issue a decision within 8 weeks of the Panel being constituted.

If the School Closure Review Panel refuses to consent to the closure decision, or following publication of the Consultation Report Dumfries and Galloway Council decides not to implement the closure proposal, Dumfries and Galloway Council cannot publish a further closure proposal in relation to the school for 5 years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

13.0 Conclusion

Following a review of the Proposal (as per Section 10, above) it is now proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School shall be permanently discontinued with effect from 1st December 2025; and that the delineated catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School shall be realigned to St Joseph's RC Primary School, as per the maps detailed in Section 10, Figure 1.

This is considered to be the best option to address the underlying reasons for this consultation, which are:

- St Ninian's RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for nineteen months (correct March 2025), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in Dumfries and Galloway has fallen by 34% between the census' of 2011 and 2022.
- Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and Principal Teacher for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment. The annual cost of mothballing the building is £7,039.28.

14.0 Recommendation

On the basis of the consultation responses received, Education Scotland's report, and having particular regard to denominational school closures, it is recommended that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 1st December 2025; and that the delineated catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School shall be realigned to St Joseph's RC Primary School, as per the maps detailed in Section 10, Figure 1.



Dumfries and Galloway Council
Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing

Proposal Document: March 2025

Review of Education Provision
St Ninian's RC Primary School

Proposal for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School

Summary Proposal

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process, to discontinue education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School which is currently mothballed and re-align its catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School.

It is proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be discontinued with effect from 1 December 2025.

Reasons for this proposal

This is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:

- St Ninian's RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for nineteen months (correct March 2025), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in Dumfries and Galloway has fallen by 34% between the census' of 2011 and 2022.
- Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and Principal Teacher for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment. The annual cost of mothballing the building is £7,039.28.

This document has been issued by Dumfries and Galloway Council Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. This document has been prepared by the Council's Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate with input from other Council Directorates.

Publication Information

The proposal paper will be available, free of charge, at:

- DG Customer Services, Newton Stewart
- Ryan Centre, Stranraer
- Dumfries and Galloway Council Headquarters

And published on Dumfries and Galloway Council's website:

www.dumgal.gov.uk/consultations

Copies of this paper are also available on request from:

Statutory Consultation – St Ninian's RC Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

E-mail: statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk

To request this information in a more accessible format or alternative language, please contact the postal or email address listed above.

Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- a. The Parent Council of St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- b. The Parents/carers of pupils within the current St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area;
- c. The Parents/carers of pupils attending St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- d. The parents/carers of any children expected to attend St Ninian's RC Primary School or St Joseph's RC Primary School within two years of the date of publication;
- e. The pupils of St Joseph's RC Primary School (considered to be of a suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal);
- f. The staff (teaching and other) at St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- g. Trade union representatives;
- h. Cairnryan Community Council, Kirkmaiden Community Council, Lochans Community Council, Stoneykirk Community Council, Stranraer, Ochtrellure and Belmont Community Council, Castle Kennedy Community Council, Cree Valley Community Council, Isle of Whithorn Community Council, Kirkcowan Community Council, Kirkmabreck Community Council, New Luce Community Council, Old Luce Community Council, Port William and District Community Council and Royal Burgh of Wigtown and District Community Council;
- i. Parish Priest, Fr William R. McFadden
- j. Crichton Campus Leadership Group (Dumfries and Galloway Council, Dumfries and Galloway College, South of Scotland Enterprise, Scottish Funding Council, SRUC Barony College, University of West of Scotland, Glasgow University, Open University, NHS Dumfries and Galloway);
- k. Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland;
- l. Chief Executive, NHS Dumfries and Galloway;
- m. Area Commander Dumfries and Galloway, Fire Scotland.

1.0 Introduction

At Education and Learning Committee on 29 June 2023, Members were recommended to mothball St Ninian's RC Primary School from August 2023. This was following discussion with families with regard to the most appropriate education for their children. There were a number of contributing factors:

- The Headteacher position for St Joseph's RC and St Ninian's RC had been advertised on five occasions, with no applications received.
- The school roll for academic year 23/24 was anticipated to be eight.
- There were no suitable applications for the vacant Principal Teacher position

Agreement was reached with the parents that it would be appropriate to mothball St Ninian's RC from August 2023 with the pupils transitioning to other schools. Officers and Headteachers worked with families to ensure effective transition for all pupils and staff.

Education and Learning Committee – 29 June 2023 – Item 12 – Transformation Update – Partnerships and School Management Arrangements

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=5752&Ver=4>

Following engagement with the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School, Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 10 December 2024 were presented with the preliminary requirement document satisfying the requirements of phase one of the Statutory Consultation timeline. There is no requirement for an authority that is formulating an urban school closure proposal to satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended before starting to prepare its proposal paper, this phase is for rural school closure only. However, Dumfries and Galloway Council feel the inclusion of this phase is important for all schools and the communities they serve, therefore it has been included in the process for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Members agreed to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee – 10 December 2024 – Item 11 – Statutory Consultation – St Ninian's RC Primary School

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6132>

The statutory process for the closure of a school is laid out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

In addition, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a right for community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management. The community may wish to consider alternative uses for the building as part of this process.

Councils, as an Education Authority, have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028, Education and Learning Directorate.

The Council will improve education and learning opportunities to help all our children, young people and citizens fulfil their potential. This starts with pre-school, then school, before progressing into further or higher education or transition into work. We will work with our partners to create and promote lifelong learning opportunities so everyone in the region can live a meaningful and fulfilling life and contribute to their community.

Strategic Outcomes:

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

2.0 Proposal

It is proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be discontinued with effect from 1 December 2025 and re-align its catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School.

It is proposed that children living in the current St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area would be directed to St Joseph's RC Primary School depending on the outcome of the statutory consultation process. Maps illustrating the current and proposed catchment area are detailed below in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 – Current St Ninian's RC Primary School Catchment Area

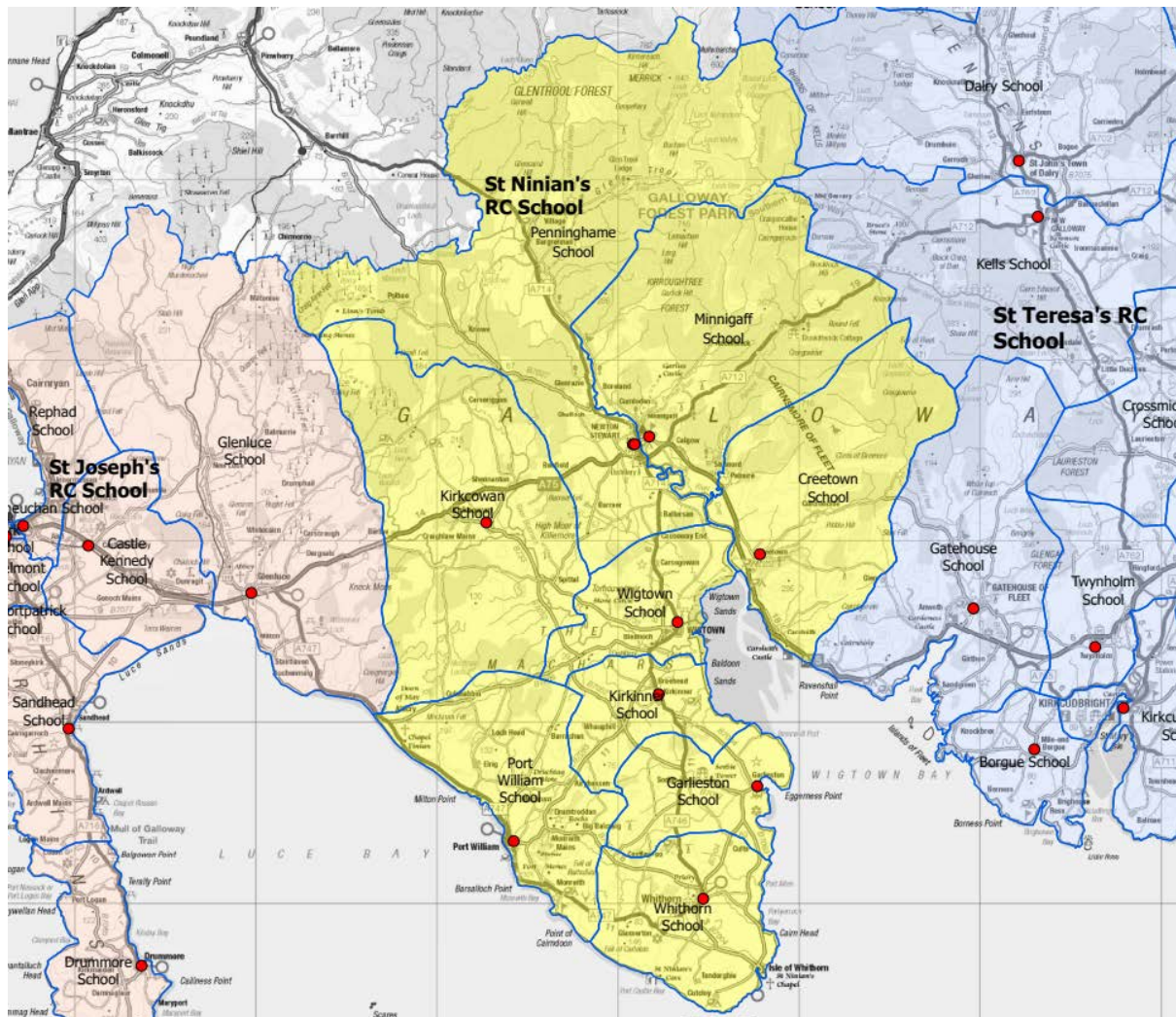
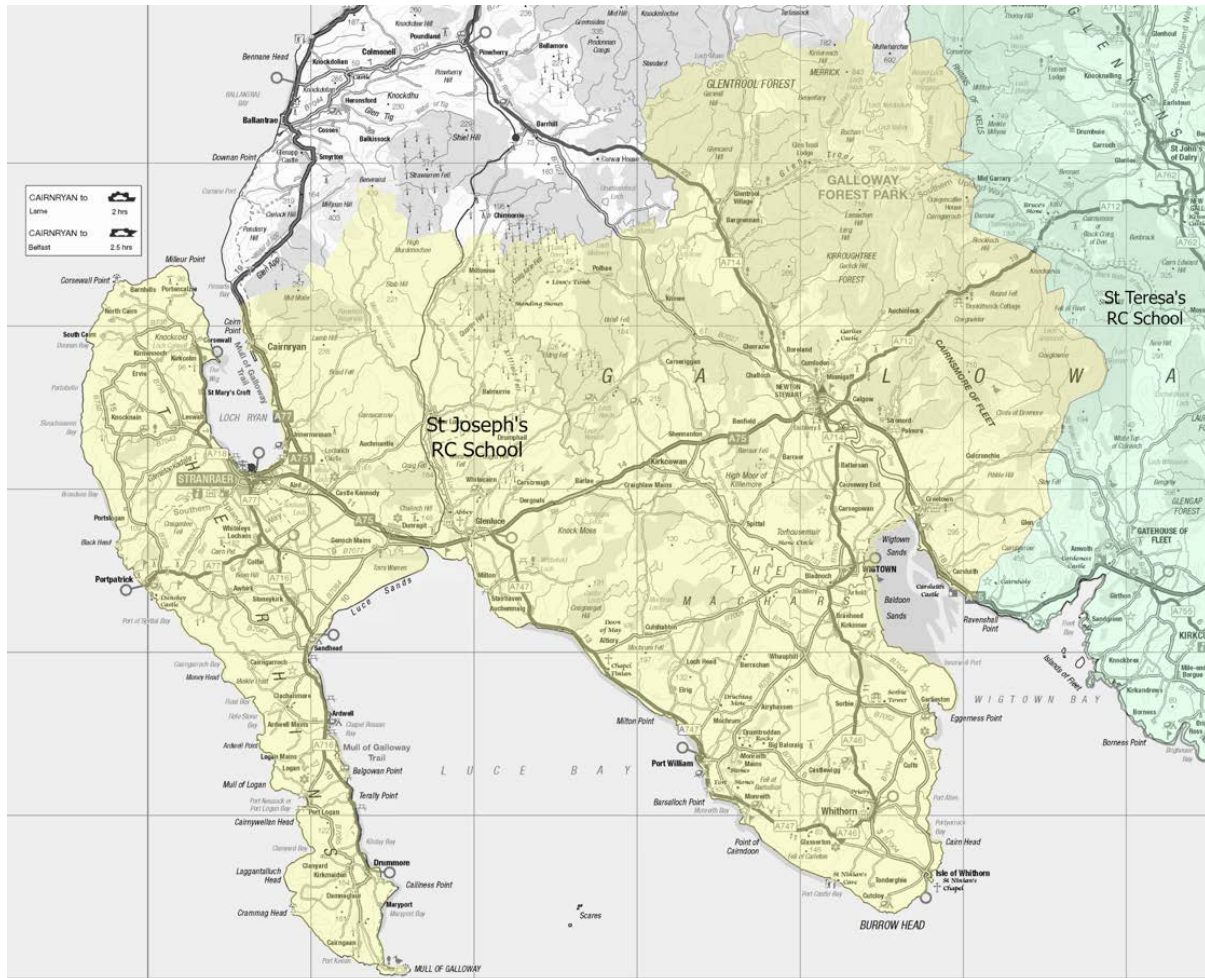


Figure 2 – Proposed Realigned St Joseph's RC Primary School Catchment Area



2.1 Reasons for this Proposal

This is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are:

- St Ninian's RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for nineteen months (correct March 2025), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in Dumfries and Galloway has fallen by 34% between the census' of 2011 and 2022.
- Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and Principal Teacher for St Ninian's RC

Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.

- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment. The annual cost of mothballing the building is £7,039.28.

2.2 Additional Considerations

- The education benefits as set out in Section 7 to current and future primary aged children within the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area.
- Councils have a statutory duty, introduced in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, to make arrangements to secure Best Value.
- On 10 December 2024, Elected Members approved the 10 School Model Principles to be used as a basis for a sustainable School Estate. Applying these Principles will help ensure 'best-value' and sustainable settings, resulting in an improved learning environment for all our children and young people, whilst considering the needs and wishes of people and communities. These Principles are detailed in the Preliminary Requirements document at Appendix 3.
- Dumfries and Galloway Council currently has in excess of 4,546 (32%) spaces within its current primary school estate. It must be acknowledge that the costs-per-pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high and that underutilised schools are expensive to maintain and operate. The current condition, suitability and over capacity is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the school estate.

3.0 Preliminary Requirements

Dumfries and Galloway Council is required to consider the future of St Ninian's RC Primary School, as it has been mothballed for approximately nineteen months (correct March 2025). Dumfries and Galloway Council have considered the reasons for making this proposal, and have also considered other viable alternatives, the likely effect on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a consequence of this proposal. Financial implications have also been considered.

Dumfries and Galloway Council considered how the implementation of this proposal would impact on the education of the children affected. The Council also considered the impact on the children who currently live in the catchment area but attend other schools, as well as children who may potentially live in the catchment area in the future.

The place of the school in the community was also considered, in terms of the impact this proposal would have on the sustainability of the community itself. Prior to the mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School, school lets focussed around the

adjacent Penninghame Primary School. There are a number of Council owned and community facilities across Newton Stewart which are not impacted by this proposal.

It is noted and acknowledged that the mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School has led to pupils not accessing a Roman Catholic education, however journey times for pupils have either remained the same or decreased with pupils attending their catchment non-denominational primary schools.

Three options were presented to the local community by the Council for consideration during the pre-consultation phase. Of the three options which were considered by the community and the Council; c is the option favoured by Dumfries and Galloway Council, as it is considered to most adequately address the reasons for the proposal. The three options were:

- a. Re-open St Ninian's RC Primary School
- b. Continued Mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School with the temporary catchment of St Joseph's RC Primary School
- c. Closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School and Realign the catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School, Stranraer (the proposal)

Splitting the catchment area was not considered as a reasonable alternative given the current size and scale of the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area, the distance to St Tereas's RC Primary School (Dumfries).

When considering the above options during the pre-liminary requirement phase, the following factors were key in arriving at option c. as the most appropriate responses to the underlying reasons behind consideration of this proposal:

- the positive educational benefits of attendance at an alternative school, whether this be St Joseph's RC Primary School or a non-denominational primary school;
- projected low pupil numbers at St Ninian's RC Primary School, and the associated impact on pupils' educational progress and social development;
- the challenges in recruiting and retaining Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) teaching staff;
- the lack of expressed local support for the re-opening or continuation of mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School and the need to make a decision regarding the future of the school.

Following the community engagement, the preliminary requirement document was presented to Dumfries and Galloway Council's Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 10 December 2024. As previously stated, there is no requirement for an authority that is formulating an urban school closure proposal to satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended before starting to prepare its proposal paper, this phase is for rural school closure only. However, the inclusion of this phase is important for all schools and the communities they serve, therefore it has been included in the process for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Members agreed to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure

of St Ninian's RC Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

During the community engagement regarding the future options for St Ninian's RC Primary School, there were a range of viewpoints gathered from parents and members of the community.

The majority of responses 77% (20 respondents) to the survey were in favour of St Ninian's RC Primary School having an alternative use; closure was not specified; one respondent was in favour of closure. In order for the building to have an alternative use, whether that be for education purposes or community asset transfer (CAT), the school would need to go through the statutory consultation process in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. Nine parent/carers were supportive of the school building having an alternative use. A small number of respondents 12% (3 respondents) to the survey were in favour of St Ninian's RC Primary School reopening, a further 8% (2 respondents) wanted to see the school enter into a further period of mothballing.

Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel arrangements in place since mothballing. There would be little or no alteration to the current environmental impact. There would be a financial impact on Dumfries and Galloway Council with regard to school transport if pupils from the current St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area chose to attend St Joseph's RC Primary School, however to date no pupils have chosen to attend St Joseph's RC Primary School, instead they attend their non-denominational primary school and receive transport in line with Dumfries and Galloway Council's Schools Admissions Policy.

3.1 Alternatives to the Proposal

The community engagement process prior to the drafting of this Proposal considered the views of members of the community and also considered any other alternatives to the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School. Full details of the community engagement, and the findings from the preliminary requirements phase, are set out in Section 4.0 of the Preliminary Requirement document at Appendix 3.

After the community engagement, Dumfries and Galloway Council concluded that the proposal to close St Ninian's RC Primary School and realign its catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School is the most reasonable means to address the underlying reasons for considering the future of St Ninian's RC Primary School. Further detail is provided below in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact.

4.0 School Roll/Changing Demographics

Demographics and pupil numbers were considered as part of the Preliminary Requirement Document, Section 3.4 of Appendix 3.

The information in relation to school rolls as shown below in Figures 3 and 4 are drawn from the yearly pupil census which takes place in September each year. Past pupil numbers are historic data from past pupil censuses. Pupil projections are based on NHS data. School rolls by their nature may fluctuate slightly on an ongoing basis due to changes in pupil numbers as a result of pupils moving to and from the catchment area and parents/carers exercising their right to make placing requests.

4.1 Demographics of D&G

Dumfries and Galloway Council holds electronic records of school rolls back to academic year 1975/76. Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18.2% fall in the 0-15 age group from 2018 to 2032. St Ninian's RC Primary Schools roll has not mirrored that of Dumfries and Galloway as a region, however there has been a steady decline since the school roll peaked at 33 in academic year 2017/18. These historical school rolls are detailed in Figures 3 and 4 below.

Figure 3

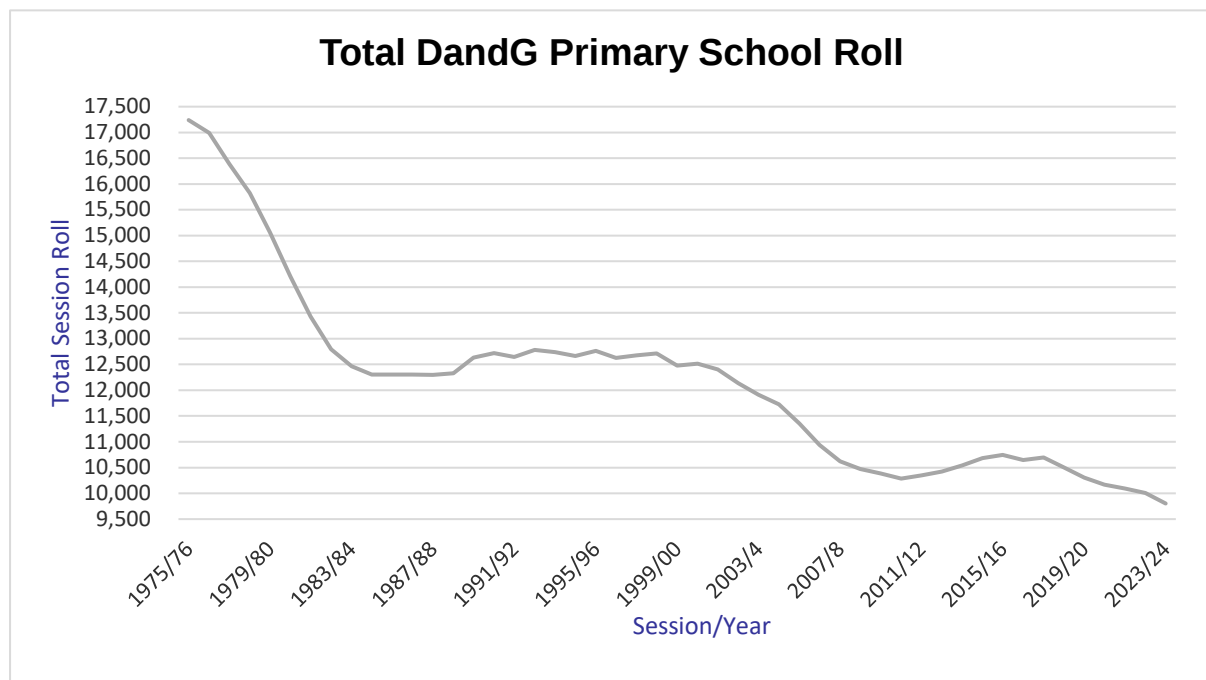
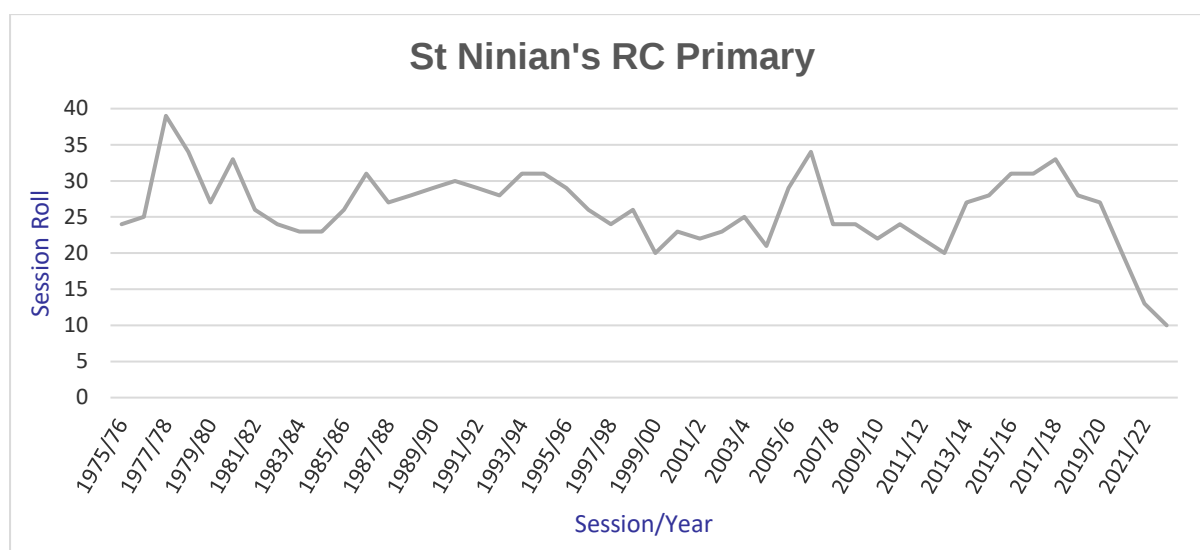


Figure 4

There are currently 15 children baptised in the Roman Catholic Church of P1-P7 age (academic year 2024/25) residing within the catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School (data received from the baptismal records from the parishes of Sacred Heart, St Martin and St Ninian and Our Lady and St Ninian). The catchment children are detailed in figure 5 below. These children of primary school age all attend other schools in the area, some through placement when the school was mothballed and others through parental choice.

Figure 5 – Children baptised in the Roman Catholic Church

Academic Year	Pre-nursery	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2024/25	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	3	3	3	3	15
2025/26					2	0	1	2	3	3	2	14
2026/27					2	2	0	1	2	3	3	13
2027/28					2	2	2	0	1	2	3	12
2028/29					2	2	2	2	0	1	2	11

4.3 Projected Roll

In January 2024, as part of the targeted press and social media campaign for Primary 1 enrolment, a press release was issued in the Wigtown Free Press and Dumfries and Galloway Standard. Emails were also sent to over 12,000 individuals; this informed all recipients that applications could be made for pupils to enrol (primary 1) or transfer (Primary 2 – Primary 7) to St Ninian's RC Primary School for academic year 2024/25. Following this enrolment and transfer opportunity no enrolment or transfer forms to attend St Ninian's RC Primary School were received.

In December 2024 and January 2025 all families residing within the catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School along with ward officers, ward members and community councils were contacted via email to notify them of the enrolment (P1)

and transfer (P2-P7) opportunity for academic year 2025/26. The enrolment process for academic year 2025/26 had not completed at the point this Proposal Paper went to print but there were no parents/families that expressed an interest in enrolling or transferring their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School.

4.4 Housing Development

The current Local Development Plan (LDP2) for Dumfries and Galloway was published in 2019 it provides the planning framework and guides the future use and development of land in towns, villages and the rural area. It also indicates where development, including regeneration, should happen and where it should not.

LDP3 is currently in development and will be published in 2027.

Inset maps for Garlieston, Kirkcowan, Newton Stewart and Wigtown can be found at Appendix 4.

Within Newton Stewart planning permission has been granted for 70 houses at NST.H4, these properties are being developed by a registered social landlord, Wheatley Group. Work is expected to start on this site in 2025/26 with completion forecast for early 2027. Dumfries and Galloway Council will work closely with Wheatley Group as this development progresses.

In addition to those settlements with inset maps as detailed above, the LDP2 Housing Development in Villages (Supplementary Guidance – February 2020) <https://tinyurl.com/2bz94bpf> covers the villages of Bladnoch, Carsluith, Glentroll, Isle of Whithorn, Sorbie and Whauphill.

5.0 Teacher Numbers

Teacher numbers remain fairly consistent nationally, with a 0.5% decrease in the number of teachers nationally from 2021 to 2023. In Dumfries and Galloway there has been a 2% reduction in the FTE number of teachers from 2021 to 2024.

St Ninian's RC Primary School has been officially mothballed for approx. nineteen months (correct March 2025), during this period staff recruitment to many schools has continued to be a challenge. Schools within the area have struggled to recruit and retain staff, particularly in relation to Head Teachers and supply staff. Despite a sustained effort to secure staff, there is reason to think that staffing would continue to be a considerable challenge for St Ninian's RC Primary School as with all schools across Dumfries and Galloway.

At the current time, if the proposal was to be accepted, there would be no impact on staffing levels at St Joseph's RC Primary School.

6.0 Condition and Suitability of the Building

In September 2021 the condition of St Ninian's RC Primary School was graded a B performing adequately but showing minor deterioration. However, whilst the overall condition is B, there are some areas, roof, mechanical and electrical that were forecast to be graded as C, poor – showing major problems and not operating optimally over the forthcoming years. The suitability of St Ninian's RC Primary School was carried out in 2022, the school was graded as B. Full financial information is detailed in Section 8 and Appendix 1 of this Proposal Paper.

7.0 Educational Benefits Statement

Assessment of likely educational benefits for pupils as required by section 3 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Should this proposal be implemented, the Council believes that there will be considerable educational benefits. These centre around:

- Learning and teaching;
- Educational Outcomes;
- Experiences and opportunities;
- The environment for learning.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) recognises the unique communities and contexts in which all our schools sit. It recognises the professionalism of Headteachers and their wider teams, supporting the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes that their learners need to adapt, think critically and flourish in an ever-changing global society. Individual Headteachers and schools are empowered to design and provide an enriched curriculum that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners and one which reflects the uniqueness of their local community and their context. In partnership with children, parents/carers, staff and the wider community each school works to develop a vision, values and aims unique to their setting and community.

St Ninian's RC Primary School and Penninghame Primary School share the same site within Newton Stewart. They are both accessible small-town schools (Scottish Government classification) and are within one mile of the local non-denominational secondary school, Douglas Ewart High School.

St Joseph's RC Primary School has a school roll of 29 children. Year groups within St Joseph's RC Primary School range from 3 pupils (Primaries 1, 2, 3 & 5) to 7 pupils (Primary 7). These larger numbers allow pupils to benefit from increased friendship groups and to develop their social skills through building relationships. These relationships help them to become Confident Individuals and Responsible Citizens supporting them to overcome the challenges and exercise responsibilities as a member of a larger social group, within a supportive educational environment. They are able to work as part of a team, take part in team activities, exercise their responsibilities and have their voice heard on a range of school-based committees.

The establishment of a larger friendship group can also support their transition to secondary school.

7.1 Learning and Teaching

The curriculum within St Joseph's RC Primary School includes a broad range of planned experiences that allow all children to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The vision of St Joseph's RC Primary School, which has been developed in partnership with all stakeholders reinforces 'In Christ we live, love and learn'. This vision is supported by the values of Wellbeing, Respect and Perseverance which are embedded across the school through assemblies, rewards and celebrations.

In St Joseph's RC Primary School children are encouraged to lead their learning and be active participants who are highly motivated, enthusiastic and engaged in their learning and the life of the school. The views of children are actively sought and acted upon. Pupils play a part in school improvement and change, leading a number of groups across the school including House Captains, Pupil Council, Eco Committee, Enterprise Group, Digital Leaders, STEM Leaders and Reading Champions.

Learning is planned across the four contexts of learning – curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, the ethos and life of the school and opportunities for personal achievement. This supports children to achieve their full potential, whilst providing them with a wide range of experiences and opportunities. Curriculum overviews are in place for all curricular areas to ensure that there is coverage across the Curriculum for Excellence experiences, outcomes & benchmarks.

Within the school, children benefit from being part of a social context in which they can build relationships, develop resilience and skills for life, learning and work. They are able to collaborate with their peers in a variety of situations and learning activities, both within the classroom and around the school, which allow them to exercise responsibility and leadership. Children are provided with opportunities to work as part of a team and to represent their school at local, regional and national events including badminton, football, Creating Engineers Challenge, Maths Week Scotland and British Science Week.

St Joseph's RC Primary School has achieved the Silver Rights Respecting Schools Award and is now working towards Gold. The school is committed to a children's rights-based approach and engages with all stakeholders in planning what this will look like within their context. Supporting their Rights Respecting Schools work, St Joseph's RC Primary School has developed a Religious Observance Calendar. Local faith leaders support this Religious Observation Calendar, including the local parish priest from St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church. The school has also been awarded the Promise Award which supports outcomes for care experienced children.

St Joseph's RC Primary School has worked to develop their learning & teaching approaches to include learning through play. They have engaged with Local

Authority Principal Teachers of Play Pedagogy to incorporate play as a tool to support their pupil's cognitive development and help them to gain a better understanding of concepts which enhance their wider development. This work is focused in both classrooms, where staff are working to refresh classroom environments, resources and approaches to learning & teaching.

The use of digital technologies has been a school improvement priority. Financial investment has taken place a wide range of digital devices including interactive panels, laptops and iPads to support learner's experiences. The school has been successful in gaining additional external funding to support further digital projects. All staff have engaged in professional learning, have an understanding of pedagogy and learning theories in relation to digital technology and digital skills. These practices will support learners to become digital literate and equipped to face the challenges of the 21st Century.

The Headteacher of St Joseph's RC Primary School is also Headteacher of Portpatrick Primary School, together this arrangement is known as West Rhins Partnership. The Headteacher supports her staff through an annual Professional Review and Development process. This in turn leads to professional development opportunities which support effective school improvement and pupil outcomes. The Headteacher is supported in her role by Principal Teachers in both St Joseph's RC and Portpatrick Primary Schools. Leadership capacity of other staff within the school is also being developed with other practitioners taking on leadership & development roles.

St Joseph's RC Primary School sits alongside eleven other primary schools within the Stranraer Academy Cluster and Penninghame Primary School sits alongside eight other primary schools within the Douglas Ewart High School cluster. All cluster Headteachers meet monthly to progress their Cluster Improvement Plan. Cluster working provides an opportunity for practitioners to plan and work together on improvement priorities with stage partners, across stages and indeed sectors. This supports effective moderation and positively impacts learning and teaching, effective transitions, pupil progression pathways and positive, sustained destinations.

In addition to these geographical clusters St Joseph's RC Primary School is also part of the Roman Catholic school network. This is an informal network of Headteachers from Roman Catholic schools. This network is facilitated by the Galloway Diocese and provides opportunities for Headteachers of Roman Catholic schools to meet and potentially work together on joint projects. From this network there is an annual opportunity for all Primary 7 learners to participate in a pilgrimage event to the Whithorn site.

7.2 Educational Outcomes

The National Improvement Framework for Scottish education sets out the expectation and priorities for the education system to raise attainment for all and to close the attainment gap between the most and least advantaged children. Schools must deliver this improvement within the principles and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence, a curriculum for Scotland.

Teachers within St Joseph's RC Primary School plan, regularly assess and track pupil progress in order to ensure that every child has the challenge, support and opportunity to reach their full potential. The Headteacher meets termly with all staff to discuss pupil progress and plan next steps. Professional discussions, classroom observations, peer collaboration, learning conversations, moderation and careful tracking of attainment progress as well as wellbeing and wider achievement ensures appropriate interventions and support can be harnessed when a child needs it.

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is a key priority for the whole staff team. The wellbeing indicators of Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Respected, responsible and Included are a key feature of the work of the school. Children requiring additional supports have a range of plans and interventions in place. The wider leadership team each have a role in supporting and monitoring these plans to ensure progress and impact. This level of support, alongside close working with parents and carers, helps to ensure the needs of every child are met.

St Joseph's RC Primary School has a strong picture of attainment. In June 2024 at Primary 1 in Listening and Talking, Reading, Writing and Numeracy, 100% of pupils were achieving Early level CfE. At Primary 4 in Listening and Talking, Reading, Writing and Numeracy between 100% of learners were achieving First level CfE. At Primary 7 in Listening and Talking, Reading, Writing and Numeracy, 60-100% of pupils were achieving the Second level CfE.

Raising Attainment; Embedding Inclusion, Wellbeing & Equality; and Skills Development are identified as the key areas of focus within St Joseph's RC Primary School's School Improvement Plan. Within the area of Raising Attainment the school are working to develop effective learning & teaching approaches in maths & numeracy. There is also a focus on reading, working with the Scottish Book Trust to refresh and restructure the library space. Within Embedding Inclusion, Wellbeing & Equality the school plan to further develop their Rights Respecting Schools activity. Within this area there is also a focus on inclusive practice and developing the wider school offer (which includes working across the West Rhins Partnership). Within Skills development the school are working to develop Metaskills. A rationale and skills progression have been created with the school now working to embed the vocabulary of skills across all aspects of their work.

7.3 Experiences – Broadening the Range of Opportunities

Children at St Joseph's RC Primary School are afforded a wide range of planned activities and experiences which allow them to develop their knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes. These in turn, support their physical, social and emotional wellbeing for both now and in the future. This, combined with strong family, Church and community links, allows children to develop skills for learning life and work and supports positive learning pathways.

Cluster working has afforded opportunities for clear transition planning and events, which in turn provides further opportunities for pupils to make new connections and to ensure appropriate support at each step of their educational journey.

Children are becoming successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. They are engaged in their learning and contribute well during lessons and wider school activities. Positive relationships at all levels are evident within the ethos of both schools. Children enjoy good relationships with their peers and feel supported when things are not going as well. Pupils feel that they are listened to and that they have an active voice that can enact change.

Children are provided with a variety of planned experiences both as part of the curriculum and as wider achievements. These are developing children's meta-skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation skills. Wider achievement activities planned by St Joseph's RC Primary School include after-school clubs (netball, choir, wool crafts and homework club), residential trips for Primary 7, active school activity (badminton, golf, rugby) and West Rhins Partnership parties & event days. Staff and parent/carer body, alongside a number of community partners, gives St Joseph's RC Primary School an increased breadth of talent, interests and opportunities to harness and share within school.

7.4 Environment for Learning

St Joseph's RC Primary School is situated close to the centre of Stranraer. The current school building, from the 1940s, consists of four primary class bases (two currently in use as classrooms, one as a STEM zone and one as a library), a large gym hall/dining room and associated auxiliary space. The school has a large playground of both grass and tarmac areas.

Learners attending St Joseph's RC Primary School are also able to benefit from strong links with the local community. The Ryan Leisure Centre is located next to the school and both the Dumfries & Galloway College, Stranraer Campus and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church are located directly across the road from the school. Stranraer Library and Stranraer Museum are located within walking distance of the school. The near town centre location also provides easy access to the local shops and businesses.

7.5 Educational benefits statement summary

To summarise, were the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School to be implemented, there would be a wide range of educational benefits for pupils, as identified in the paragraphs above. These benefits would range from the children receiving a more diverse curriculum and wider range of high- quality learning experiences, to the development of self-management, social intelligence and innovation skills. The learning environment of St Joseph's RC Primary School would also offer pupils the opportunity to experience the broader life of the school, through a wider range of pupil committees and community links, to be involved in project

based and interdisciplinary learning within and across stages, as well as wider opportunities for personal achievement and involvement.

As a consequence of this proposal, the catchment of St Ninian's RC Primary School would be linked with the catchment of St Joseph's RC Primary School. Should pupils select to attend St Joseph's RC Primary School they would have greater opportunities to participate in a wider range of educational experiences and activities which are of significant educational benefit. The broader, more diverse pupil body supports greater social and emotional development and opportunities to develop extended friendship groups and peer support networks.

8.0 Financial Impact

Assessment of the financial impact as required by section 4 (2A) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

The full breakdown of the financial analysis is detailed in Appendix 1. This information gives details on the estimated cost if St Ninian's RC Primary School were still an occupied and operational establishment, the figures are taken from financial year 2022/23 as this was the last full year the school was fully occupied. As St Ninian's RC Primary School is currently mothballed, the cost for the mothballing is at £7,039.28 per year. Should the school be reopened, occupied and operational, the running costs per year are estimated at £176,717 (based on 2022/23 costs), this equates to £17,671.65 per pupil per year based on the school roll of 10 (census roll academic year 2022/23).

Column 2 of Table 1 at Appendix 1 shows the projected annual running costs of St Ninian's RC Primary School whilst Column 3 shows the additional impact on St Joseph's RC Primary School as the receiving school. The annual recurring savings (or costs) are shown in Column 4.

Whilst St Joseph's RC Primary School is detailed as the receiving school, no pupils to date have transferred or enrolled from the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area.

Table 1, School Costs. There are no figures included for column 3 as the receiving school does not require additional staffing to accommodate the additional pupils from St Ninian's RC Primary School. Prior to the mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School, the Principal Teacher had accepted a new position at another school and new Headteacher management arrangements were due to be implemented from August 2023. All remaining support staff were redeployed as per Dumfries and Galloway Council's policies and included as part of the annual staffing exercise.

Table 1, Building Costs. There are no figures included for column 3 as the receiving school does not require additional requirement to accommodate the additional pupils from St Ninian's RC Primary School. Property insurance and rates are set at zero throughout the financial template as there is a rate relief applied and all Dumfries and Galloway Council properties are insured collectively, there is no single payment attributed to individual properties.

Table 1, School Operational Costs. There are no additional costs on the receiving school as no pupils transferred.

Table 1, Transport Costs. During academic year 2022/23, three pupils at St Ninian's RC Primary School were in receipt of school transport. There are no receiving school costs as no pupils transferred to St Joseph's RC Primary School.

Table 3 in Appendix 1 details the annual running costs during mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School and these are £7,039.28 per year, which would constitute an immediate saving on closure. If the school were to be formally closed, this would allow the Council to take steps towards finding an alternative use for the building.

Table 5 in Appendix 1 details the impact on Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE). The GAE is not impacted by this proposal as St Ninian's RC Primary School is not a rural primary school.

Implementation of the proposal would potentially see an increase in transport costs to Dumfries and Galloway Council assuming pupils attended St Joseph's RC Primary School, however these are offset by the costs of maintaining and operating St Ninian's RC Primary School for a small number of pupils.

9.0 Impact Assessment

Dumfries and Galloway Council will undertake an impact assess during the consultation process in respect of this proposal, to ensure that due regard is given to whether the decisions we make are likely to impact on different groups of people across the region. The result of the impact assessment should highlight any barriers or discrimination that might affect the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School, ensuring we meet our statutory duties under the Equality Act.

10.0 Consultees

A summary of this document will be issued free of charge to all of the consultees listed at page 3 of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website: www.dumgal.gov.uk/consultations

11.0 Consultation Period

As part of a consultation process, the Education Authority must publish the proposal paper, advertise it and notify Education Scotland and all of the relevant consultees as prescribed by Schedule 2 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended, inviting them to make representations on the proposal. The consultation

period will be from 10 March 2025 until 5pm on Friday 9 May 2025, which includes at least 30 school days.

12.0 Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held on Tuesday 15 April 2025 at 6pm in Penninghame Primary School. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate is welcome to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate and Officers will present reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions to be asked and comments to be made. A note will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered.

13.0 Responses to the Proposal

Representations may be made on the following;

- the proposal;
- alternatives to the proposal as listed above; and
- suggestions of other alternatives.

Dumfries and Galloway Council will consider all representations and these should be received no later than 5.00pm on Friday 9 May 2025 by one of the methods detailed below;

Online Survey: <https://forms.office.com/e/JQiuTy8cmY>



Letter to: Statutory Consultation – St Ninian’s RC Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

Email to: statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk

Respondents are required to clearly state the capacity in which they are expressing their views and agree to their name and any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process and published in the final Consultation Report (all other personal information will be redacted).

All responses received will be redacted and shared with Education Scotland as required by section 8(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

14.0 Meetings with Pupils

Quality Improvement Officers alongside school staff will arrange to discuss proposals with pupils (who are considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) in the affected schools. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken, and this will be published in the Consultation Report. Staff are welcome to respond through the consultation process.

15.0 Involvement of Education Scotland (HMle)

Following the close of the consultation, Dumfries and Galloway Council will provide Education Scotland with copies of the written representations submitted, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting, and any other relevant documentation. This will allow Education Scotland to prepare a report on the proposal within a period of three weeks.

16.0 Consultation Report and Time for Further Consideration

After receiving Education Scotland's report, Dumfries and Galloway Council will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report in accordance with Sections 9, 10 and 13 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. Dumfries and Galloway Council Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 9 September 2025 will thereafter make its final decision on whether to implement the proposal. The decision will be made a minimum of three weeks after publication of the Consultation Report. If Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee makes a closure decision, Dumfries and Galloway Council shall notify the Scottish Ministers within six working days of that decision and publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. The Education Authority would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and why it has been satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal.

17.0 Explanation of Approach

The Proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient

provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (S.3 of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).

18.0 Call-in of Closure Proposal and Determination of Case

The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of eight weeks to call in any closure decision made by Dumfries and Galloway Council in certain circumstances. This eight-week timeframe would consist of an initial three weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the ministers, and a further five weeks for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether to issue a call in notice. During this period the Education Authority will not proceed to implement any closure decision.

If the Scottish Ministers call in a closure proposal, it is referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels. The Convener must constitute a School Closure Review Panel within seven days for determination. The Education Authority may not implement a closure decision in whole or in part until the Panel has made its determination. It will usually issue a decision within eight weeks of the Panel being constituted.

If the School Closure Review Panel refuses to consent to the closure decision, or following publication of the Consultation Report Dumfries and Galloway Council decides not to implement the closure proposal, a further closure proposal cannot be published in relation to the school for five years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

19.0 Grounds for Call-In etc

The Scottish Ministers may issue a call-in notice where it appears to the Scottish Ministers that Dumfries and Galloway Council may have failed:

- (a) in a significant regard to comply with the requirements imposed on it by (or under) the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended so far as they are relevant in relation to the closure proposal, or
- (b) to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to its decision to implement the proposal.

20.0 Conclusion

It is proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be discontinued with effect from 1 December 2025. The catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School shall be re-aligned to St Joseph's RC Primary School.

It has been assessed that the proposal is the most appropriate means of addressing the underlying reasons for formulating it, which are:

- St Ninian's RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for nineteen months (correct March 2025), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in Dumfries and Galloway has fallen by 34% between the census' of 2011 and 2022.
- Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and principal teacher for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment. The annual cost of mothballing the building is £7,039.28.

Other Considerations

- The education benefits as set out in Section 7 to current and future primary aged children within the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area.
- Councils have a statutory duty, introduced in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, to make arrangements to secure Best Value.
- On 10 December 2024, Elected Members approved the 10 School Model Principles to be used as a basis for a sustainable School Estate. Applying these Principles will help ensure 'best-value' and sustainable settings, resulting in an improved learning environment for all our children and young people, whilst considering the needs and wishes of people and communities. These Principles are detailed in the Preliminary Requirements document at Appendix 3.
- Dumfries and Galloway Council currently has in excess of 4,546 (32%) spaces within its current primary school estate. It must be acknowledge that the costs-per-pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high and that underutilised schools are expensive to maintain and operate. The current condition, suitability and over capacity is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the school estate.

Financial Template

Table 1

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
Row 2	Name of School	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school (enter name of school)	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 3	St Ninian's RC Primary School			
Row 4	School costs			
Row 5	Employee costs - note 1			129,473
Row 6	teaching staff	129,473	-	129,473
Row 7	support staff	10,733	-	10,733
Row 8	teaching staff training (CPD etc)	-	-	-
Row 9	support staff training	-	-	-
Row 10	Supply costs - note 2	-	-	-
Row 11	Building costs:			
Row 12	property insurance	-	-	-
Row 13	non domestic rates	5,690	-	4,199
Row 14	water & sewerage charges	2,300	-	124
Row 15	energy costs	7,645	-	4,804
Row 16	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	4,925	-	4,925
Row 17	building repair & maintenance	197	-	197
Row 18	grounds maintenance	1,062	-	531
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6	3,585	-	3,585
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital	-	-	-
Row 21	other - H&S items servicing and maintenance, waste	531	-	531
Row 22				
Row 23	School operational costs:			
Row 24	learning materials	870	-	870
Row 25	catering (contract or inhouse)	-	-	-
Row 26	SQA costs	-	-	-
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	909	-	909
Row 28				
Row 29	Transport costs: note 3			
Row 30	home to school	10,450	-	10,450
Row 31	other pupil transport costs	130	-	130
Row 32	staff travel	-	-	-
Row 33	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	178,499	-	171,460
Row 34				
Row 35	Income:			
Row 36	Sale of meals	352	-	352
Row 37	Lets	-	-	-
Row 38	External care provider	-	-	-
Row 39	Other Free School Meals	1,431	-	1,431
Row 40	SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	1,783	-	1,783
Row 41				
Row 42	TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	176,717	-	169,677
Row 43				
Row 44	UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	17,671.65	-	-

Column 5

Column 6

Column 7

Table 2			
Capital costs		School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7		-	-
Third party contributions to capital costs		-	-

Table 3

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	-
non domestic rates	1,491
water & sewerage charges	2,176
energy costs	2,841
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	-
security costs	-
building repair & maintenance	-
grounds maintenance	531
facilities management costs	-
other	-
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	7,039.28

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	-

Table 5

Impact on GAE - note 5	
GAE IMPACT	-

Notes

1. The total costs incurred for teaching staff (row 5) and support staff (row 6) are required to be included. Column 2 should include the current costs for a full financial year for the school proposed for closure, and column 3 should include the *additional* cost to the receiving school as a result of staff transferring.

For teaching staff, this should include regular teachers, itinerant teachers, learning support teaching staff and special education (ASN) staff.

Itinerant teaching staff includes central support services such as English as additional language support, hearing, visually impaired services, educational psychology services.

For support staff, this should include classroom assistants, administration staff and janitorial staff.

For all staff the costs entered should include salary, NI and pension costs.

If the school proposed for closure has less than 3 staff members, then the cumulative staff costs only should be given in row 5 (for both teaching and support staff), so as to avoid possible disclosure of individual salaries.

Training costs should be identified separately in rows 7 and 8.

2. Supply costs to cover teaching and support staff. This may be held in a central budget, be devolved or shared across the budgets.

3. 'Home to school' pupil transport costs should include those school transport costs incurred in accordance with Council policy. 'Other pupil transport costs' will cover costs incurred for the transport of pupils for activities such as swimming etc

4. Row 30 of column 3 should include the additional transport costs related to the increased home to school transport arrangements that are put in place in accordance with Council policy. This figure is therefore likely to be considerably higher than current costs.

5. This table is to capture the impact on the revenue support grant as a result of changes to GAE. Impact on GAE should consider the issues covered in the GAE section of the guidance document that accompany this template.

6. Facilities management costs will include costs related to caretaking, janitorial and security.

7. The capital costs for the receiving school should be taken across the life cycle of the school in line with the life expectancy of that school. The capital costs for the school proposed for closure should be taken across the same life cycle period.

Statutory Consultation – St Ninian's RC
Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

10 March 2025

E-mail statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk

Dear Consultee,

Review of Education Provision Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing St Ninian's RC Primary School, Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is consulting on the proposal to close St Ninian's RC Primary School. This notice provides a summary of the proposal; it is a requirement for you to be notified of the consultation as a consultee, in accordance with Schedule 2 Section 1 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is conducting a public consultation from Monday 10 March to Friday 9th May 2025. This is the period in which you will be able to make representation to Dumfries and Galloway Council in respect of the proposal. It is important that everyone we are consulting with tells us about their thoughts on the proposal.

This summary provides further information on where a full copy of the proposal can be obtained and also advises as to how you can make representation.

The Proposal

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process, to discontinue education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School which is currently mothballed and realign its catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School.

It is proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be discontinued with effect from 1 September 2025.

Reasons for this Proposal

This is considered to be the best option to address the reasons for the proposal which are;

- St Ninian's RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for sixteen months (correct December 2024), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in Dumfries and Galloway has fallen by 34% between the census' of 2011 and 2022.

- Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and principal teacher for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment. The annual cost of mothballing the building is £7,039.28.

Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028

Councils, as an Education Authority, have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028, Education and Learning Directorate.

The Council will improve education and learning opportunities to help all our children, young people and citizens fulfil their potential. This starts with pre-school, then school, before progressing into further or higher education or transition into work. We will work with our partners to create and promote lifelong learning opportunities so everyone in the region can live a meaningful and fulfilling life and contribute to their community.

Strategic Outcomes:

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

Alternatives to the Proposal (Including the Proposal)

The proposal and alternatives to the proposal were considered as part of the preliminary requirement and are detailed below;

- a. Re-open St Ninian's RC Primary School
- b. Continued mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School with the temporary catchment of St Joseph's RC Primary School
- c. Closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School and realign the catchment area to St Joseph's Primary School

Representations may be made on the following;

- the proposal;
- alternatives to the proposal as listed above; and
- suggestions of other alternatives.

What we will do –

We will consult by:

- Providing a notice of the consultation and a summary of the proposal to the relevant consultees **this is that notice and summary**
- Placing an advert in the local press
- Putting information on our website - www.dumgal.gov.uk/consultations
- Holding a public meeting to explain the proposal
- Ask all consultees to tell us what they think of the proposal

What to do now –

- Please read the full proposal document
- Please attend the public meeting which will be held on Tuesday 15th April 2025 at 6pm in Penninghame Primary School
- Let us know what you think by 5pm on Friday 9th May 2025 by:

Online Survey: <https://forms.office.com/e/JQiuTy8cmY>



Letter to: Statutory Consultation – St Ninian’s RC Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

Email to: statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk

Respondents are required to clearly state the capacity in which they are expressing their views and agree to their name and any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process and published in the final Consultation Report (all other personal information will be redacted).

What Next?

Dumfries and Galloway Council is seeking your views on the proposal during the consultation period, it does not assume that the proposal will go ahead. All points raised during the consultation period will be included in the final consultation paper before being presented to Elected Members at Education, Skills and Community

Wellbeing Committee on 9 September 2025 where a decision will be taken as to the outcome of this process.

If the proposal goes ahead, any children current and future from the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area wishing to attend a Roman Catholic primary school would be educated at St Joseph's RC Primary School.

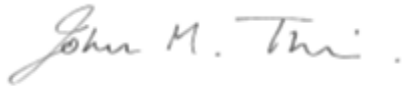
Please note that this summary document is for convenience only. Copies of the Proposal Paper can be obtained from:

- DG Customer Services Newton Stewart
- Ryan Centre Stranraer
- Dumfries and Galloway Council Headquarters

And published on Dumfries and Galloway Council website:

www.dumgal.gov.uk/consultations

Yours faithfully



John Thin
Head of Education Resources

St Ninian's RC Primary School – Phase One – Preliminary Requirement

1.0 Introduction

Dumfries and Galloway Council are committed to giving all local children and young people an equal chance to fulfil their potential. Our ambition is to be a successful region, with a growing economy, based on fairness, opportunity and quality public services, where all citizens prosper. For our children and young people, raising attainment in schools is key to who they may become and how they will contribute to society. This will require a sustainable school estate that works for everyone and is able to secure 'best-value' to the public.

The Dumfries and Galloway Learning Estate Strategy was agreed by the Education and Learning Committee on 26 January 2023. The Learning Estate Strategy (LES) sets out a holistic, long-term view to ensure all schools are well designed, maintained and managed and most importantly that this view is shared between all stakeholders and decision makers.

On 10 November 2023, Elected Members approved the 10 School Model Principles listed below to be used as a basis for a sustainable School Estate. Applying these Principles will help ensure 'best-value' and sustainable settings, resulting in an improved learning environment for all our children and young people, whilst considering the needs and wishes of people and communities.

To meet current and future demand, we must continue to transform services, reduce spend in unsustainable areas and be prepared to think differently about how services are delivered to make the most effective use of resources. The Principles are weighted, with the priority for review starting at the top of the list.

School Estate Principles

1. Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
2. Primary pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school.
3. Secondary pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 45 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school.
4. To enhance high quality social and educational experiences, primary schools should ordinarily support 3 classes and have composite classes of no greater than 3-year groups.
5. To enhance high quality social and educational experiences, secondary schools should ordinarily support a 2-form entry (2 registration classes in S1).
6. Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising of at least 3 FTE members based at the same school.
7. Schools should have an occupancy rate where possible greater than 60% utilisation of the capacity of the school, and ideally should be operating at 80% utilisation.
8. All schools should be adaptable to children, staff, and visitors with disabilities.

9. All schools should support community use where required in the local context.
10. All schools should have key facilities including a hall, dining area, staff room, school office and grass playing fields as appropriate to the size and scale of the school.

Maintaining the engagement of stakeholders and keeping them informed is an important part of successful change. The co-operation of a variety of stakeholders will be needed, and we know that good consultation means better outcomes, and the benefits of engaging with, consulting and involving stakeholders at this early stage helps to highlight expectations and identify all the options.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended requires that educational benefits should be at the forefront of any proposal to make a significant change to schools. It specifies that the local authority must, for all consultations, prepare an Educational Benefits Statement and publish it within the proposal paper. Only through a close partnership with our schools and stakeholders can a proposal be produced that will benefit both current and future learners.

On 14 March 2024 the Education and Learning Committee agreed that Officers engage with local families and the wider community of St Ninian's RC Primary School to further consider future options for the school.

2.0 Reason for the Proposal

Dumfries and Galloway Council has identified the underlying reasons why the future of the School is being considered, which are as follows:

1. St Ninian's RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for sixteen months (correct December 2024), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
2. Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
3. Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in DandG has fallen by 34% between the census' of 2011 and 2022.
4. Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and principal teacher for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
5. Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is therefore considering the future of St Ninian's RC Primary School. The various options are explored within this paper.

3.0 Background

At Education and Learning Committee on 29 June 2023, members were recommended to mothball St Ninian's RC Primary School from August 2023 this was following discussion with families with regard to the most appropriate education for their children. There were a number of contributing factors;

- The Headteacher position for St Joseph's RC and St Ninian's RC had been advertised on five occasions, with no applications received.
- The school roll for academic year 23/24 was anticipated to be eight.
- No suitable applications for the vacant Principal Teacher position

Agreement was reached with the parents that it would be appropriate to mothball St Ninian's RC from August 2023 with the pupils transitioning to other schools. Officers and Headteachers are worked with families to ensure effective transition for all pupils and staff.

The term 'mothballing' is used, according to Scottish Government guidance, where the school roll has fallen to very low pupil numbers, and in some cases zero. Mothballing, rather than closing a school, gives the opportunity for it to reopen should circumstances change. There is no legal process for mothballing.

Families were given the opportunity during the Primary 1 enrolment process for academic year 2024/25 to enrol or transfer their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School, a press release in the Wigtown Free Press informed families of the opportunity along with a Dumfries and Galloway Council email targeting 12,000 individuals. There were no enrolments or transfers received for academic session 2024/25. At Education and Learning Committee officers recommended a further academic year of mothballing for St Ninian's RC Primary School for session 2024/25 which was agreed by members on 14 March 2024 due to there being no children in attendance.

The delineated catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School is currently temporarily re-aligned to St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer).

3.1 Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028

Councils, as an Education Authority, have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028, Education and Learning Directorate.

The Council will improve education and learning opportunities to help all our children, young people and citizens fulfil their potential. This starts with pre-school, then school, before progressing into further or higher education or transition into work. We will work with our partners to create and promote lifelong learning opportunities so everyone in the region can live a meaningful and fulfilling life and contribute to their community.

Strategic Outcomes:

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

3.2 St Ninian's RC Primary School

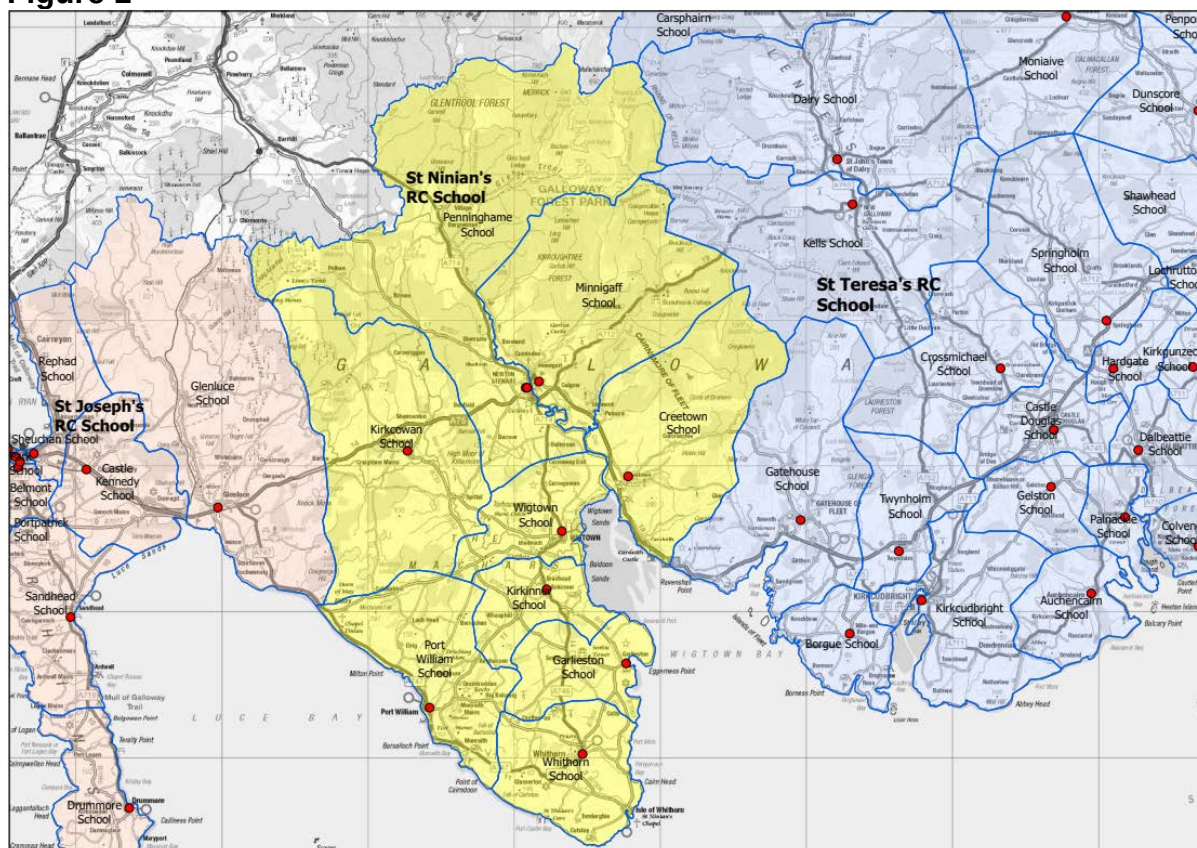
St Ninian's RC Primary School is a denominational primary school and is classified as a being urban under the Scottish Government classification and it is located in the remote small town of Newton Stewart. St Ninian's RC Primary School is located on the same site as Penninghame Primary School.

St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area is made up the catchment areas of the following non-denominational schools; Creetown Primary School, Garlieston Primary School, Kirkcowan Primary School, Kirkinner Primary School, Minnigaff Primary School, Penninghame Primary School, Port William Primary School, Whithorn Primary School and Wigtown Primary School.

The catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School borders the catchment areas of St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer) to the West, St Teresa's RC Primary School (Dumfries) to the East with the neighbouring authority of the South Ayrshire to the North.

The school catchment area is detailed in yellow in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1



The pink area in Figure 1 is the partial catchment area of St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer) and the catchment area of St Teresa's Primary School (Dumfries) is detailed in blue.

Distance between St Ninian's RC Primary School and surrounding denominational primary schools are listed below;

St Joseph's RC Primary School	25.1 miles
St Teresa's RC Primary School	48.3 miles

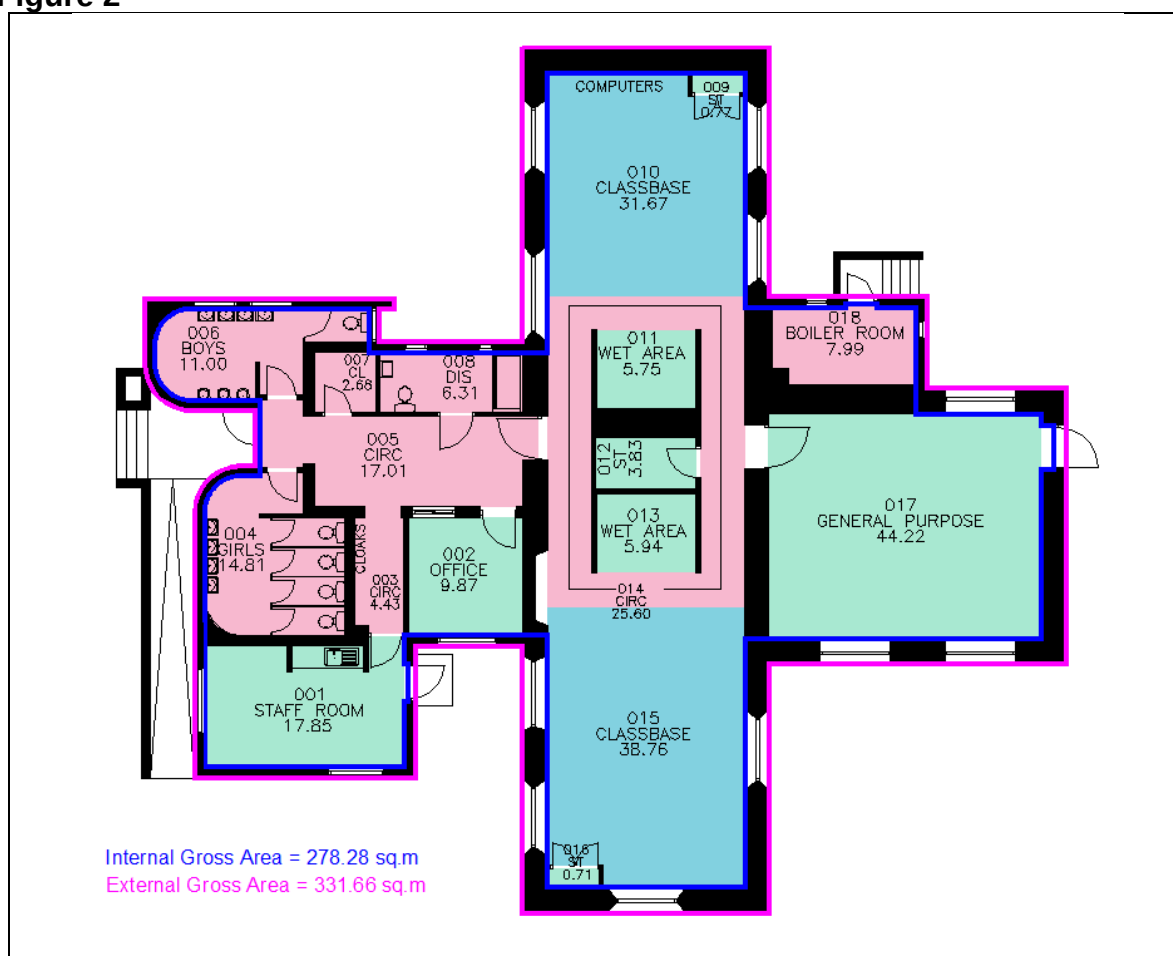
It is important to note that the geography of the catchment area means that travel distances/times will be different for all pupils, which is why the information listed above is from St Ninian's RC Primary School to other Roman Catholic schools in Dumfries and Galloway. As detailed there are nine non-denominational primary schools in the area which if the preference of families can be reached with a reduced travel distance and time.

St Ninian's RC Primary School site and school building are owned by Dumfries and Galloway Council. There is no record of the building, or any part of the building being listed with Historic Environment Scotland, however the school is located within the defined conservation area within Newton Stewart.

The school has a capacity of 42 pupils. It is a single-storey building. The accommodation comprises of entrance/circulation area, office, staffroom, two partially open plan classrooms with wet areas, staffroom, general purpose room, pupil toilets and an accessible toilet. Facilities at Penninghame Primary School were utilised for dining and PE. Externally the facilities are shared with Penninghame Primary School with tarmac, grass and developed areas.

The school floorplan is detailed in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2



At the point St Ninian's RC Primary School was mothballed it shared a partner Headteacher with the adjacent Penninghame Primary School. This partnership arrangement had been planned to change as part of Dumfries and Galloways management arrangements for schools, the position of Head Teacher of St Ninian's RC Primary School and St Josephe's RC Primary School (Stranraer) had been advertised five times with no applicants.

St Ninian's RC Primary School delivered primary education from P1 to P7. There is a nursery on site at Penninghame Primary School, local children attended this nursery or at other nearby schools or partner provider nurseries in the wider area. Pupils at St Ninian's RC Primary School shared the dining and PE facilities at Penninghame Primary School.

Information relating to the Extent, Condition, Sufficiency and Suitability of the school estate is reported by Dumfries and Galloway Council to the Scottish Government on an annual basis, this is known as the Core Facts Return.

Condition is concerned with the current state of the fabric of the school and with safety and security, it is undertaken by external surveyors impartial to Dumfries and Galloway Council and follows scoring methodology defined by Scottish Government for all schools. St Ninian's RC Primary School was assessed in September 2021 and the overall condition rating for the property was B, satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration. However, whilst the overall condition is B, there are some areas, for example the roof, mechanical and electrical were graded as C, poor – showing major problems and not operating optimally or D, bad – economic life expired and/or risk of failure.

Suitability is a measure of whether a school building and its grounds are fit for the purpose of delivering the education curriculum. The suitability of St Ninian's RC Primary School was carried out in 2022, the school was graded as B.

The school has been operating as a single teacher school since academic year 2021/22. The threshold for a second teacher in Dumfries and Galloway is 19 pupils or above.

3.3 Local Development

The current Local Development Plan (LDP2) for Dumfries and Galloway was published in 2019 it provides the planning framework and guides the future use and development of land in towns, villages and the rural area. It also indicates where development, including regeneration, should happen and where it should not. LDP3 is currently in development and will be published in 2027.

Inset maps for Garlieston, Kirkcowan, Newton Stewart and Wigtown can be found at Appendix 4.

Within Newton Stewart planning permission has been granted for 70 houses at NST.H4, these properties are being developed by a registered social landlord, Wheatley Group. Work is expected to start on this site in 2025/26 with completion forecast for early 2027. Dumfries and Galloway Council will work closely with Wheatley Group as this development progresses.

In addition to those settlements with inset maps as detailed above, the LDP2 Housing Development in Villages (Supplementary Guidance – February 2020) <https://tinyurl.com/2bz94bpf> covers the villages of Bladnoch, Carsluith, Glentrool, Isle of Whithorn, Sorbie and Wauphill.

3.4 Demographics and Pupil Numbers

Dumfries and Galloway Council holds electronic records of school rolls back to academic year 1975/76. Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next ten years. St

Ninian's RC Primary Schools roll has not mirrored that of Dumfries and Galloway as a region, there has however been a steady decline since academic year 2014/15. These historical school rolls are detailed in figures 3 and 4 below.

Figure 3

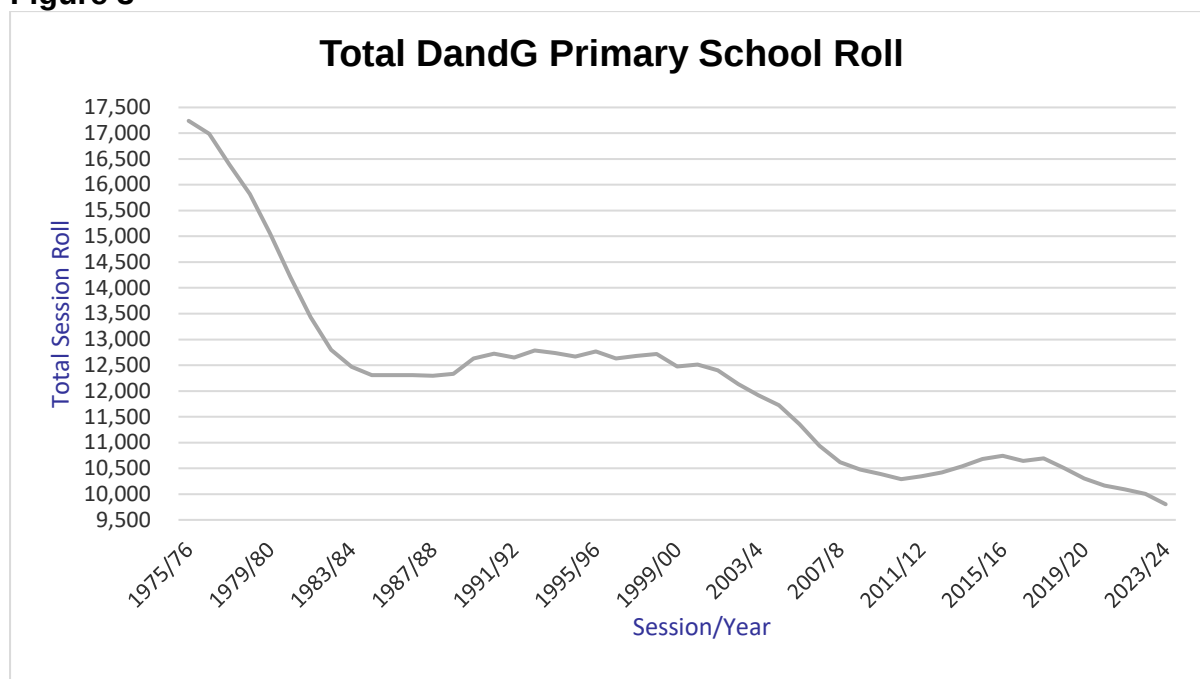
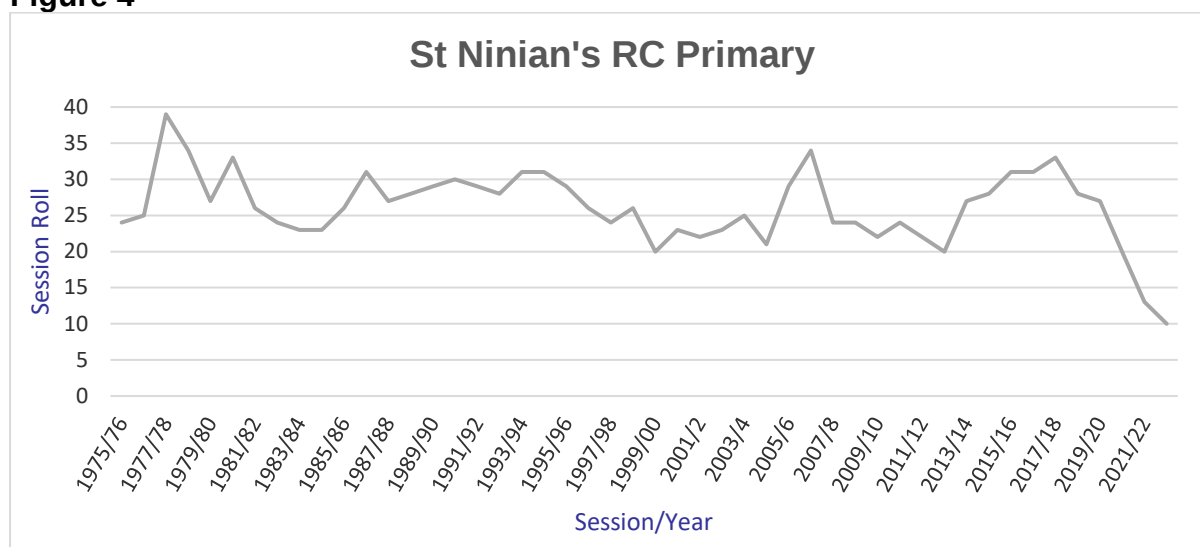


Figure 4



There are currently 15 children baptised in the Roman Catholic Church of P1-P7 age (academic year 2024/25) residing within the catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School (data received from the baptismal records from the parishes of Sacred Heart, St Martin and St Ninian and Our Lady and St Ninian). The catchment children are detailed in figure 5 below. These children of primary school age all attend other schools in the area, some through placement when the school was mothballed and others through parental choice.

Figure 5 – Children baptised in the Roman Catholic Church

Academic Year	Pre-nursery	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2024/25	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	3	3	3	3	15
2025/26					2	0	1	2	3	3	2	14
2026/27					2	2	0	1	2	3	3	13
2027/28					2	2	2	0	1	2	3	12
2028/29					2	2	2	2	0	1	2	11

The expected school roll for St Ninian's RC Primary School for academic year 2023/24 was 8 pupils. Assuming that the children that were in attendance when the school mothballed and applying those figures alongside the catchment pupils, this outturns the projected school roll as detailed in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6

Academic Year	Pre-nursery	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2024/25	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	4
2025/26					2	0	0	1	0	1	1	5
2026/27					2	2	0	0	1	0	1	6
2027/28					2	2	2	0	0	1	0	7
2028/29					2	2	2	2	0	0	1	9

A school roll of 9 children in a school with a capacity of 42 would result in an occupancy level of 21%. Such a low occupancy level is unsustainable. This is also dependant on all catchment children attending the school and whilst historic trends show that St Ninian's RC Primary School has gained more children than it has lost through placing requests, the numbers have fallen sharply over recent years.

In addition to the numbers listed above there were 2 non-catchment children that attended St Ninian's RC Primary School prior to mothballing, these children are included in Figure 6 above.

From data received from the baptismal records from the parishes of Sacred Heart, St Martin and St Ninian and Our Lady and St Ninian. we know that there are (for academic year 2024/25), four nursery aged children and four children pre-nursery living within the catchment.

3.5 Pupil Enrolments

In January 2024 as part of the targeted press and social media campaign for Primary 1 enrolment, a press release was issued in the Wigtown Free Press and Dumfries and Galloway Standard. Emails were also sent to over 12,000 individuals; this informed all recipients that applications could be made for pupils to enrol (primary 1) or transfer (Primary 2 – Primary 7) to St Ninian's RC Primary School for academic year 2024/25.

Following this enrolment and transfer opportunity no enrolment or transfer forms to attend St Ninian's RC Primary School were received.

4.0 Community Engagement

Council Officers from the Education and Learning Directorate conducted the following engagements with the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School to keep them fully informed and to explore potential options for the future of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

- 17 September 2024 – Public meeting at Penninghame Primary School 6pm. A presentation was given by officers explaining the national and regional context, there was the opportunity for those present to ask questions and an online survey gathering the thoughts of the community was shared. A summary of the meeting is appended to this report (Appendix 1)
- September/October 2024 – An online survey was made available from 4 September until 11 October 2024 paper copies were also made available as well as the option to write to the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate, contact information was made available and circulated at the public meeting.
The survey questions and a summary of submitted feedback is appended to this report (Appendix 2)
- 29 October 2024 – Public meeting at Penninghame Primary School 6pm. Opportunity to discuss the findings of the survey/feedback received and discuss the next steps. Those present were made aware that officers will be taking a recommendation Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 10 December 2024 for members to agree the commencement of the statutory consultation process for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. A summary of the meeting is appended to this report (Appendix 3)

5.0 The Proposal and Reasonable Alternatives to the Proposal

There have been no children in attendance at St Ninian's RC Primary School since August 2023, members of Education and Learning Committee on 29 June 2023 agreed to mothball St Ninian's RC Primary School for academic year 2023/24. There were a number of contributing factors including the school roll for academic year 2023/24 was anticipated to be eight. The Headteacher position for St Joseph's RC and St Ninian's RC had been advertised on five occasions, with no applications received. No suitable applications for the vacant Principal Teacher position. In agreement with families it was felt that the most appropriate course of action was to mothball the school.

Whilst the building is mothballed it continues to deteriorate, the community and Dumfries and Galloway Council would like to find a resolution to the current mothballing arrangement.

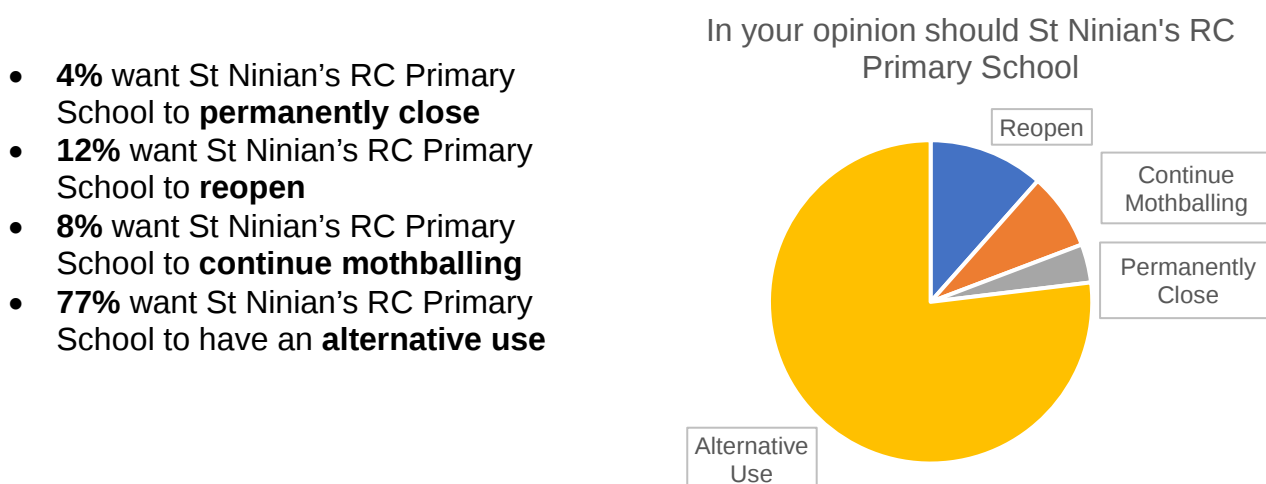
Dumfries and Galloway Council along with several other rural authorities is facing increasing challenges recruiting staff. Alongside this the pupil roll across the region continues to fall, with less primary age year on year as detailed in Figure 3.

Dumfries and Galloway Council has considered the future of St Ninian's RC Primary School. The following options are explored further within this paper:

- Re-open St Ninian's RC Primary School
- Continued Mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School with the temporary catchment of St Joseph's RC Primary School
- Closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School and Realign the Catchment Area to St Joseph's Primary School

Following the community engagement and as part of the online survey, consideration was given the future of St Ninian's RC Primary School, the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School were asked "In your opinion should St Ninian's RC Primary School?" the responses are as below –

Figure 7



An alternative use of the building, whether that be for a different education purpose or for community or business use, cannot be progressed until such time that St Ninian's RC Primary School has gone through the statutory consultation process in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

6.0 Option A: Re-open St Ninian's RC Primary School

The Statutory Guidance for the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended, in relation to mothballing states "the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote."

St Ninian's RC Primary School was officially mothballed from August 2023 approximately sixteen months (correct December 2024).

6.1 Community Feedback

A small number of respondents 12% (3 respondents) to the survey were in favour of St Ninian's RC Primary School reopening. The families of thirteen primary and nursery aged children responded to the survey none of which expressed an interest in the school reopening, the reasons given were as follows:

"Children are happy in their current school, no need to change"

"I do not think it necessary to have two separate schools on one campus"

"We are not religious"

6.2 Pupil Numbers

Families of St Ninian's RC Primary School were given the opportunity during the P1 enrolment process (29 January – 2 February 2024) for academic year 2024/25 to enrol or transfer their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School. All families living within the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area were contacted via email, as well as a press release in the Wigtown Free Press and Dumfries and Galloway Standard to inform families of the opportunity. Following this enrolment and transfer opportunity no enrolment or transfer forms were received.

Families will have the opportunity to enrol/transfer their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School in January 2025. However, there is no indication at this stage that there is any demand for reopening St Ninian's RC Primary School in August 2025.

6.3 Financial Information

The total recurring annual revenue cost to reopen St Ninian's RC Primary School would amount to £186,698.85. This figure is based on the last full financial year the school was operational and includes increased salary costs.

The total transport costs for the last full academic year St Ninian's RC Primary School was operation was £10,450.00. It is not possible to predict the costs of transport if the school was to reopen as no one has to date expressed a desire to enrol or transfer their child(ren) to the school.

6.4 Community Impact

The reopening of St Ninian's RC Primary School would enable the premises to be used by the community however there are facilities across the wider community. There are no records of schools lets taking place at St Ninian's RC Primary School for a number of years, activities tend to be focussed towards Penninghame Primary School where there is a large general-purpose hall with stage area. Whilst the presence of a school may make the area a more attractive place to live, there is Penninghame Primary School on the same site and Minnigaff Primary School approx. 1 mile away.

6.5 Travel arrangements

The travel distance from St Ninian's RC Primary School to St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer) is 24.7 miles via the A75. Travel time is approximately 32 minutes (Source: Google Maps). At the point St Ninian's RC Primary School was closed no pupils were transferred to St Joseph's RC Primary School, their preference was to attend their local non-denominational school. Reopening of the school would minimise the travel distance for those pupils wishing to attend a Roman Catholic primary school.

6.6 Educational Benefits

Curriculum for Excellence recognises the unique communities and contexts in which all our schools sit. It recognises the professionalism of Headteachers and their wider staff teams supporting the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes that their learners need to in an ever-changing global society. Individual Headteachers and schools are empowered to design and provide an enriched curriculum that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners and one which reflects the uniqueness of their local community and their context. In partnership with children, parents/carers, staff and the wider community each school works to develop a vision, values and aims unique to their setting and community.

There are specific educational benefits to reopening St Ninian's RC Primary School in relation to the learning and teaching outcomes as detailed in Curriculum for Excellence for religious education. As detailed in Curriculum for Excellence: religious and moral education;

"All Roman Catholic schools are expected by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland to follow guidelines established by the Catholic Education Commission on the provision of adequate time for religious education within the school curriculum."

"The role of the wider parish community plays an important part in the delivery of religious education."

There are no specific educational benefits across the wider curriculum as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of the children.

There would be issues with respect to the current suitability as mentioned in section 3.4 of this report, which would negatively impact on learning and teaching.

6.7 Summary

Whilst a small number of respondents indicated their preference for the school to be reopened, If the school were to reopen for academic year 2025/26 the school roll

would be zero based on the latest data gathered through the opportunity for families to enrol or transfer.

There are financial implications if the school is to be reopened, these values are detailed in section 6.3 of this report.

The travel distance from St Ninian's RC Primary School to St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer) is 24.7 miles via the A75. Travel time is approximately 32 minutes (Source: Google Maps). No alternative travel arrangements were implemented at the point at which the school was mothballed as pupils either moved onto secondary school or enrolled at their local non-denominational school. Should the school reopen, there may be a positive environmental impact assuming pupils enrolled at St Ninian's RC Primary School instead of St Joseph's RC Primary School.

When considering the above alongside the expected school roll of zero, the challenges in recruiting staff and the preference of families to remain or chose other schools in the area, reopening St Ninian's RC Primary School is not a reasonable option.

7.0 Option B: Continued Mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School with the temporary catchment of St Joseph's RC Primary School

The Statutory Guidance for the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended, in relation to mothballing states "the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote."

St Ninian's RC Primary School was officially mothballed from August 2023 approximately sixteen months (correct December 2024).

7.1 Community Feedback

A very small number of respondents 8% (2 respondents) to the survey were in favour of the continued mothballing of St Ninian's RC Primary School. There were no parent/carers who were in favour of the continuation of mothballing.

Whilst the school remains mothballed Dumfries and Galloway Council will ensure that all families are notified of the opportunity to enrol or transfer their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School for the following academic year.

Those present at the public meeting were keen to ensure that the St Ninian's RC Primary School building was repurposed and not left to deteriorate. The building is located within the conservation area in Newton Stewart. The continuation of mothballing will not bring certainty or a purpose for the building which is what the school community of Penninghame Primary School and the wider community are looking for.

7.2 Pupil Numbers

Families of St Ninian's RC Primary School were given the opportunity during the P1 enrolment process (29 January – 2 February 2024) for academic year 2024/25 to enrol or transfer their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School. All families living within the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area were contacted via email, as well as a press release in the Wigtown Free Press and Dumfries and Galloway Standard to inform families of the opportunity. Following this enrolment and transfer opportunity no enrolment or transfer forms were received.

Families will have the opportunity to enrol/transfer their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School in January 2025. However, there is no indication at this stage that there is any demand for reopening St Ninian's RC Primary School in August 2025.

Pupil numbers are not projected to rise over the next 4 years as detailed in Figures 5 and 6 above. The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance clearly states in section 63 (Mothballing);

“When a school roll falls very low, the authority and/or community may consider that the school is not presently viable but do not wish to close it immediately because there is a reasonable prospect that the number of pupils in the area will increase such that it should be re-opened in the future.”

From the engagement conducted to date there is little evidence to support that there is a reasonable prospect that the numbers of families for whom their preference is a Roman Catholic education for their children will increase.

7.3 Financial Information

The current annual revenue cost (2023/24) to Dumfries and Galloway Council of the mothballed St Ninian's RC Primary School is £7,039.28. This includes water and sewerage charges, energy costs, repairs and maintenance and waste.

The total transport costs for the last full academic year St Ninian's RC Primary School was operational was £10,450.00.

7.4 Community Impact

Since the start of the 2024/25 academic year Dumfries and Galloway Council received three expression's of interest (EOI's) from community groups under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 with a view to a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) coming forward for consideration.

Following advice from Dumfries and Galloway Council's Legal Service, community groups were informed that EOI's could not be accepted at this stage. The CAT process cannot commence until the statutory process regarding St Ninian's RC Primary School has been completed and a further determination is made regarding future use of the school.

The continuation of mothballing would not allow for the St Ninian's RC Primary School building to be repurposed, nor for the CAT process to commence or reach a conclusion.

7.5 Travel arrangements

The travel distance from St Ninian's RC Primary School to St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer) is 24.7 miles via the A75. Travel time is approximately 32 minutes (Source: Google Maps). At the point St Ninian's RC Primary School was closed no pupils were transferred to St Joseph's RC Primary School, their preference was to attend their local non-denominational school.

7.6 Educational Benefits

Curriculum for Excellence recognises the unique communities and contexts in which all our schools sit. It recognises the professionalism of Headteachers and their wider staff teams supporting the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes that their learners need to in an ever-changing global society. Individual Headteachers and schools are empowered to design and provide an enriched curriculum that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners and one which reflects the uniqueness of their local community and their context. In partnership with children, parents/carers, staff and the wider community each school works to develop a vision, values and aims unique to their setting and community.

Penninghame Primary School and St Ninian's RC Primary School share the same site within Newton Stewart. They are both accessible small town schools (Scottish Government classification) and are within one mile of their local non-denominational secondary school, Douglas Ewart High School. Children from St Ninian's RC Primary School transfer to Douglas Ewart Secondary School, there is a denominational secondary school in Dumfries (St Joseph's College) that pupils are welcome to attend. In July 2024, it was predicated that St Ninian's Primary School would have a roll of 8 children from August 2024. Following the decision to mothball the school, 6 of these children transferred to Penninghame Primary School, and 2 children transferred to Port William Primary School (their catchment primary school). No children selected to attend the closest Roman Catholic Primary School, St Joseph's RC Primary, which is located 24.7 miles away in Stranraer.

Children from St Ninians' RC Primary, attending Penninghame Primary, continue to benefit from a curriculum design which supports their location and the skills and attributes to meet their individual needs context. Penninghame Primary School has a school roll of 242 children. The main building consists of nine primary classes, a large gym hall and dining room and associated auxiliary space. On site, and led by the same management team, Penninghame Primary School also include an Early Learning and Childcare setting, currently with roll of 58 children and an Additional Support for Learning, Learning Centre.

Across Penninghame Primary School the children benefit from a social context where they can build relationships, develop social skills, exercise responsibilities, meet challenges and develop resilience as members of a wider social group. Children have the opportunity to influence the direction of the school and their learning experiences through a range of leadership groups and pupil committees. Year groups within Penninghame Primary School range from 22 to 42 children. As a

result, children are able to build relationships with peers which in turn can support their transition into secondary education.

7.7 Summary

The members of the communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School that completed the survey were clear that there was little support for the continuity of mothballing. Those present at the pupil meetings were keen to find a new purpose for the school building and ensure its purpose within the community.

The number of children identified through the Roman Catholic Church do not indicate a rise that would support the continuation of mothballing.

On the basis that pupil numbers are not expected to increase, and the schools mothballing is not of benefit to the community or Dumfries and Galloway Council, therefore continued mothballing is not viewed as a reasonable option.

8.0 Option C: Closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School and Realign the Catchment Area to St Joseph's RC Primary School

Pupil numbers are not projected to rise over the next 4 years as detailed in Figures 5 and 6 above. The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance clearly states in section 63 (Mothballing);

“The maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote”

St Ninian's RC Primary School was officially mothballed from August 2023 approximately sixteen months (correct December 2024).

8.1 Community Feedback

One respondent (4%) to the survey was in favour of St Ninian's RC Primary School closing, a further twenty respondents (77%) did not specify they were in favour of closure however their preference was that St Ninian's RC Primary School should have an alternative use. In order for the building to have an alternative use, whether that be for education purposes or CAT, the school would need to go through the statutory consultation process in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. Nine parent/carers were supportive of the school building having an alternative use.

8.2 Pupil Numbers

Families of St Ninian's RC Primary School were given the opportunity during the P1 enrolment process (29 January – 2 February 2024) for academic year 2024/25 to enrol or transfer their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School. All families living within the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area were contacted via email, as well as a press release in the Wigtown Free Press and Dumfries and Galloway

Standard to inform families of the opportunity. Following this enrolment and transfer opportunity no enrolment or transfer forms were received.

Families will have the opportunity to enrol/transfer their children to St Ninian's RC Primary School in January 2025. However, there is no indication at this stage that there is any demand for reopening St Ninian's RC Primary School in August 2025.

Pupil numbers are not projected to rise over the next four years as detailed in Figures 5 and 6 above.

From the engagement conducted to date there is little evidence to support that there is a reasonable prospect that the numbers of families for whom their preference is a Roman Catholic education for their children will increase.

8.3 Financial Information

The total recurring revenue savings from the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School would amount to £176,716.52, based on actual figures last full financial year the school was operational.

8.4 Community Impact

The potential closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School would remove the option for Roman Catholic education in the parishes of Sacred Heart, St Martin and St Ninian and Our Lady and St Ninian but as highlighted in Figures 5 and 6, there are very few children living within the catchment area that are baptized in the Roman Catholic Church.

There are no records of schools lets taking place at St Ninian's RC Primary School for a number of years, activities tend to be focussed towards Penninghame Primary School where there is a large general-purpose hall with stage area. Whilst the presence of a Roman Catholic primary school may make the area a more attractive place to live, there is Penninghame Primary School on the same site and Minnigaff Primary School approx. 1 mile away.

8.5 Travel arrangements

The travel distance from St Ninian's RC Primary School to St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer) is 24.7 miles via the A75. Travel time is approximately 32 minutes (Source: Google Maps). At the point St Ninian's RC Primary School was closed no pupils were transferred to St Joseph's RC Primary School, their preference was to attend their local non-denominational school.

8.6 Educational Benefits

Curriculum for Excellence recognises the unique communities and contexts in which all our schools sit. It recognises the professionalism of Headteachers and their wider staff teams supporting the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes that their learners need to in an ever-changing global society. Individual Headteachers and schools are empowered to design and

provide an enriched curriculum that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners and one which reflects the uniqueness of their local community and their context. In partnership with children, parents/carers, staff and the wider community each school works to develop a vision, values and aims unique to their setting and community.

Penninghame Primary School and St Ninian's RC Primary School share the same site within Newton Stewart. They are both accessible small town schools (Scottish Government classification) and are within one mile of their local non-denominational secondary school, Douglas Ewart High School. Children from St Ninian's RC Primary School transfer to Douglas Ewart Secondary School, there is a denominational secondary school in Dumfries (St Joseph's College) that pupils are welcome to attend. In July 2024, it was predicated that St Ninian's Primary School would have a roll of eight children from August 2024. Following the decision to mothball the school, six of these children transferred to Penninghame Primary School, and two children transferred to Port William Primary School (their catchment primary school). No children selected to attend the closest Roman Catholic Primary School, St Joseph's RC Primary, which is located 24.7 miles away in Stranraer.

Children from St Ninians' RC Primary, attending Penninghame Primary, continue to benefit from a curriculum design which supports their location and the skills and attributes to meet their individual needs context. Penninghame Primary School has a school roll of 242 children. The main building consists of nine primary classes, a large gym hall and dining room and associated auxiliary space. On site, and led by the same management team, Penninghame Primary School also include an Early Learning and Childcare setting, currently with roll of 58 children and an Additional Support for Learning, Learning Centre.

Across Penninghame Primary School the children benefit from a social context where they can build relationships, develop social skills, exercise responsibilities, meet challenges and develop resilience as members of a wider social group. Children have the opportunity to influence the direction of the school and their learning experiences through a range of leadership groups and pupil committees. Year groups within Penninghame Primary School range from 22 to 42 children. As a result, children are able to build relationships with peers which in turn can support their transition into secondary education.

8.7 Summary

The community had differing opinions on the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School. A small number would like the school to reopen or the continuation of mothballing however the majority were in favour of the school having a new purpose. In order for the building to have an alternative use the school would need to go through the statutory consultation process in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. There were no families in favour of reopening St Ninian's RC Primary School.

The potential closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School would remove the option for Roman Catholic education in the parishes of Sacred Heart, St Martin and St Ninian and Our Lady and St Ninian but as highlighted in Figures 5 and 6, there are very few

children living within the catchment area that are baptised in the Roman Catholic Church.

The travel distance from St Ninian's RC Primary School to St Joseph's RC Primary School is 24.7 miles via the A75. Travel time is approximately 32 minutes (Source: Google Maps). The school roll of St Joseph's RC Primary School is not expected to rise and therefore has the capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers from St Ninian's RC Primary Schools catchment area. There are however nine non-denominational primary schools in the area that offer much shorter travel distances if families chose to take that option.

Those present at the public meetings highlighted the investment in new social housing in the area. This increase in housing may result in more children of all ages moving into the catchment area, Dumfries and Galloway Council will work with Wheatley Homes South to understand this demand and consider the impact across the schools in Newton Stewart.

There was a general consensus that given the locality on the same site as Penninghame Primary School and being located within a conservation area, it is important that to allow consideration of a new purpose for the building. Since the start of the 2024/25 academic year Dumfries and Galloway Council received three expression's of interest (EOI's) from community groups under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 with a view to a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) coming forward for consideration.

Following advice from Dumfries and Galloway Council's Legal Service, community groups were informed that EOI's could not be accepted at this stage. The CAT process cannot commence until the statutory process regarding St Ninian's RC Primary School has been completed and a further determination is made regarding future use of the school.

This has been identified as a reasonable option for further consideration.

9.0 Conclusion

Three alternative options have been reviewed in considering the future of St Ninian's RC Primary School. For each option, information was collated, and consideration given to:

- Community feedback;
- Pupil numbers;
- Financial Information;
- Assessment community impact, and travel arrangements, and
- Educational benefits.

There is no requirement for an authority that is formulating an urban school closure proposal to satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended before starting to prepare its proposal paper, this phase is for rural school closure only. However, the inclusion of this phase is important for all schools and the communities they serve, therefore it has been included in the process for St Ninian's RC Primary School.

After consideration of the options and having regard to the specific reasons identified in this report closing St Ninian's RC Primary School and realigning its catchment area is the most reasonable option in order to address the reasons for the possible proposal.

Members are asked to:

- Note the community engagement undertaken.
- Agree to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

These recommendations will go to Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 10 December 2024.

Appendix 1

Public Meeting 1: Summary

On 17th September 2024, a public meeting was held at Penninghame Primary School.

The meeting was an open meeting with catchment families, community councils and elected members directly contacted to advise them in advance of the meeting.

The meeting was facilitated by 3 Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate officers and attended by 10 community members, including 7 parents, 1 elected member, 1 community council representatives and the head teacher of Penninghame Primary School.

Following introductions a presentation was given covering the following areas:

- Outline of Engagement
- Background Information
 - National and regional context
 - Demographics
- St Ninian's RC Primary School
 - Catchment Area
 - Pupil Projections
- Survey Questions
 - Demographics
 - The future of St Ninian's RC Primary School

Discussions and questions were facilitated by Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate officers.

The key themes were –

- Community Asset Transfer process
- Statutory Consultation process
- Access to the current Penninghame Primary School site

The meeting was brought to a close.

Appendix 2

Online Survey Summary

All responses have been represented. In questions where comments were made, any identifying information has been removed.

Demographics

- 26 responses total, 24 living in the catchment area
 - o 9 parent/carers with 13 school/nursery age children
 - o 1 Community Council representative
 - o 1 Roman Catholic Church representative
- 2 respondents identified their current religion as Roman Catholic

Parent/carers with school/pre school age children

- 9 parent/carers responded, representing 13 school/nursery children
- No families expressed a desire to enroll their children at St Ninian's RC Primary School.
- It is recognised that this response does not represent all families living in the catchment area. The Diocese of Galloway was contacted to understand the current and future demand for St Ninian's RC Primary School. The parishes of Sacred Heart, St Martin and St Ninian and Our Lady and St Ninian are all within the catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School.
- The numbers detailed below include all children in the catchment area that have been baptised in the Roman Catholic Church (figures do not take account of pupils who previously attended St Ninian's RC Primary School that were not baptised in the Roman Catholic Church)

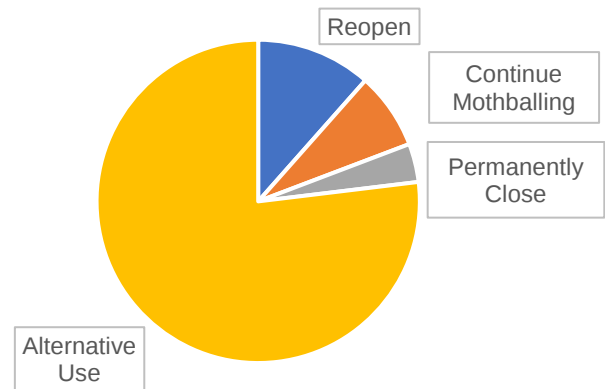
	Pre-nursery	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2024/25	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	3	3	3	3	15
2025/26					2	0	1	2	3	3	3	14
2026/27					2	2	0	1	2	3	3	13
2027/28					2	2	2	0	1	2	3	12
2028/29					2	2	2	2	0	1	2	11

Stakeholder Views on the Future of St Ninian's RC Primary School

Question: In your opinion should St Ninian's RC Primary School?

- **4%** want St Ninian's RC Primary School to **permanently close**
- **12%** want St Ninian's RC Primary School to **reopen**
- **8%** want St Ninian's RC Primary School to **continue mothballing**
- **77%** want St Ninian's RC Primary School to have an **alternative use**

In your opinion should St Ninian's RC Primary School



Question: Is there anything you think Dumfries and Galloway Council could do to encourage families to enroll at St Ninian's RC Primary School and help the school to reopen?

There were a range of comments to this question, which are listed below –

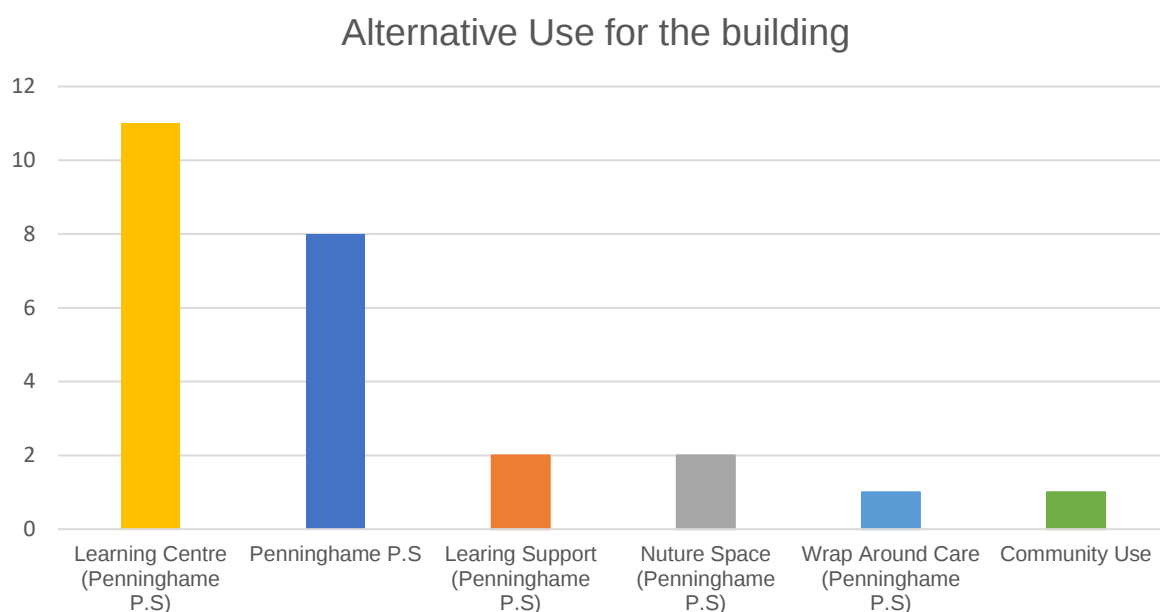
- "Every family enrolling in the Catchment area should be aware of the provision for Catholic Education so that Catholic families are aware of their choices. Realistically however the numbers in this group are very small."
- Openly advertise the school, many people are unaware of its existence
- "Promote the school's religious beliefs. Have much more interaction with St Joseph's RC primary school Stranraer. Continuing to advertise for necessary RC teachers. Do not surrender to "peer" pressure to try & make St Ninians like every other primary! St Ninians & St Josephs are crucial in our community. Children & families of catholic religion Must have the facilities to learn & be taught & grow within schools & Chapels alike. "
- More widely spread information on what different curriculum it offers etc - I wasn't given any information on this with my two children so unclear how well this was understood by other parents.
- It should be used as a special needs school for all the children in our area who so desperately need it.
- Parents of children at the Learning Centre won't need encouragement to reopen St Ninians as the new learning centre
- I think that this school should be used to support children from Penninghame primary school ie used for learning centre or to support children who struggle in school
- Integrate it with Penninghame primary school

Question: If a decision was taken to close St Ninian's RC Primary School, where should the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment be realigned to?

- Most (69%) respondents indicated a catchment realignment for St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer) would be their preference.
- Five respondents suggested Penninghame Primary School. The catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School is made up of nine non-denominational catchment areas. Penninghame Primary School already has it's own defined catchment area, a realigned denominational catchment area would need to be identified.

Question: If a decision was taken to close St Ninian's RC Primary School, do you have any suggestions on the future of St Ninian's RC Primary School, including potential alternative uses for the building?

The respondents to this question, suggested a range of alternative uses as can be seen below –



Question: Please detail below any other significant factors impacting the local communities of St Ninian's RC Primary School that Dumfries and Galloway Council should be made aware of.

Responses to this question were as follows –

- There should always be the option for RC education, it appears there may discrimination if it closes completely.
- This building needs to be retained within the school campus also for access to the school as two of the entrances are on St Ninian's site. Closure of the school and sealing off of those entrances to the campus would be hugely detrimental to the school and the community. The only access would be via Auchendoon Road which is a one way street and is already extremely busy at

school pick ups and drop off, often with significant congestion. Access to the other properties in particular Cornwall Park, a residential home would be compromised. This could lead to significant issues with access for emergency vehicles. Closure of the other entrances would increase the distance families would need to travel, again likely resulting in increase vehicular use of Auchendoon Road as families may choose to drive rather than walk.

- Even simple but very safe journeys would be compromised, such as nursery pupils are able to walk through the school grounds and out the bottom exit to reach the library where they attend events such as Book bugs, Penninghame school pupils accessing Penninghame church for their various services at Christmas etc.
- Loss of the St Ninians building and grounds would also impact on the relationship with local church which is nearly adjacent to the school. Penninghame school has been kind to allow the church to use the green space during various children's church events. Closing of the exit at the library would hinder this from happening as logistically much more difficult.
- The continued mothballing or closure of the building will result in further deterioration of the fabric of the building (which thanks to the councils insistence to turn off the heating and water has already started to occur) which will mean it is quickly unsafe to use. This will result in not only an eye sore for the school community but also become a health and safety issue. This also leads to more opportunity/attraction for vandalism.
- It is imperative that the council takes action quickly to preserve this school building and its grounds and it should be preserved for the forthcoming young generations of Newton Stewart.
- If the school isn't going to be used, make use of it for learning support children. Would really help them
- If it was to close. There would be no access for penninghame school other than auchendokn road which is bedlam at the best of times. The other 2 entrances relieves some pressure on the traffic and parking.
- The access to Penninghame Primary and St Ninians is currently via 3 main gates: at the library; off Princes Ave and Auchendoon Road. This provides ease of access to library, The Hut and Penninghame St John's church from library entrance and Princes Ave allows all parents on west side of Newton Stewart access to the school. Auchendoon Road is a one way system, over crowded and with no parking:drop off facility and is dangerous for pick up/drop off. Should St Ninians be closed permanently, I would be concerned about future of access routes and right of way. I'm aware the condition of the building is not great and that is a concern. Particularly for future use and viability of community ownership. The most sensible approach would be for St Ninians to become part of Penninghame school estate and secure the future of safe access rights and outdoor space for children. Whilst also providing a dedicated music, arts, creativity, mindfulness space to enhance pupils wellbeing and social interactions with after school clubs.

- By selling this asset privately we would be closing off 2 access points to the school, meaning safely walking to school for many children wouldn't be possible.
- Penninghame primary school is more or less full this would give them a great opportunity to grow even more the school is one of the best that can accommodate children with not only disabilities but those who struggle
- The Council is financially broke. There is a declining demand for education services due to falling school rolls. Hence, the Education department should be delivering most of the financial savings which the Council needs to make so that departments with growing demand for their services, such as Social Services, can be protected and other departments which have been financially hit over many years to "protect Education" can get a bit of a break. Any decision which keeps St Ninians school open, or the option to reopen it in the future, should lead to an immediate transfer of the total budget for the building out of Education to Council reserves to be spent on non Education related budget pressures so that the full financial effect of the decision is felt within Education and other services in the Council do not suffer further.
- All Catholic pupils have a statutory right to a Catholic Education including (but not only) Sacramental preparation. What steps have been taken to provide this for the pupils who moved from St Ninian's and those in the future? I would like this aspect clarified in order that the Catholic community is not disadvantaged.
- Penninghame primary school currently has three entrance's. If the building is disposed of this will leave one entrance to Penninghame primary.
- This will treble the number of pupils entering the school via auchendoon road. A road that already struggles with the volume of traffic, has no cycle lane and goes in the face of safe routes to school.
- It has been indicated that sale of the area would cut off access points to Penninghame Primary School meaning traffic and pedestrian numbers on Auchendoon Road would be in excess of what that street can handle and that the "safe route to school" would be removed for many children. This should be taken into consideration when looking long term.
- Two access points to penninghame primary school are located close to St. Ninian's. Were these to be removed it would dramatically increase traffic at school pick up and drop off times on an already congested road as well as, obviously, increasing the volume of people. Both factors would drastically increase the likelihood of incident. Local residents who do not have children would also suffer as a result of the increased traffic in that area. There are also children with additional needs who would struggle with the increased footfall if all children were coming from the same side of the school.
- Reducing numbers in Minnigaff Primary. Inclusion Base may benefit from moving to St Ninian's as they have limited space in a portacabin at Minnigaff.

Appendix 3

Public Meeting 2: Summary

On 29 October 2023, a public meeting was held at Penninghame Primary School.

The meeting was an open meeting with catchment families, community councils and elected members directly contacted to advise them of the meeting.

The meeting was facilitated by 2 Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Council Officers and attended by 14 community members, including 6 parents. 2 elected members were also in attendance.

Following introductions, a presentation was given detailing the engagement to date and the responses received to the survey.

Next Step – Officers proposed:

- Statutory Consultation on closure

Those present were made aware that officers will be taking a recommendation Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 10 December 2024 for members to agree the commencement of the statutory consultation process for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. Officers explained the process and the steps Dumfries and Galloway Council must take in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Discussions and questions were facilitated by Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate officers.

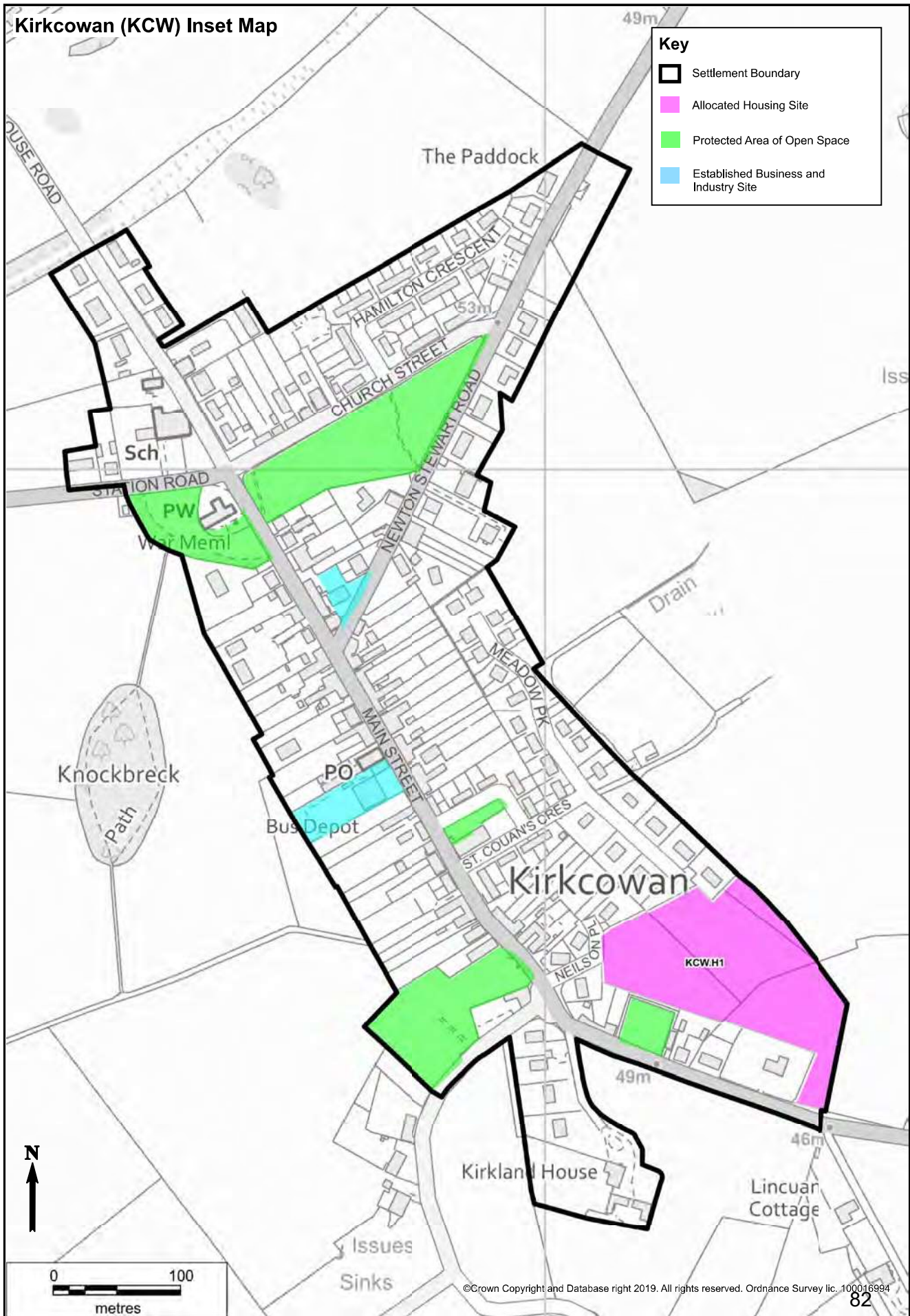
The key themes were –

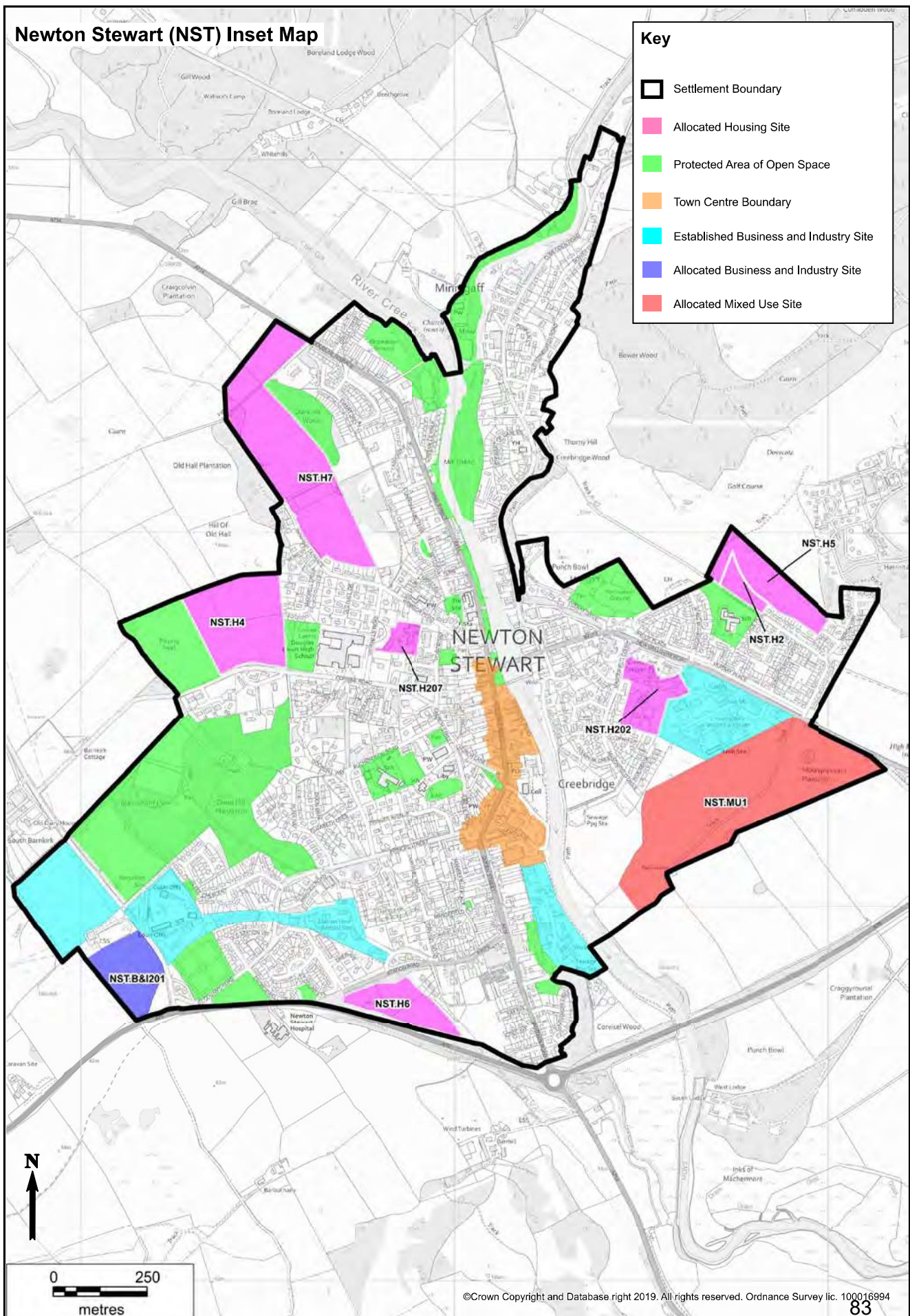
- Community Asset Transfer process
- Statutory Consultation process
- Future use of St Ninian's RC Primary School building

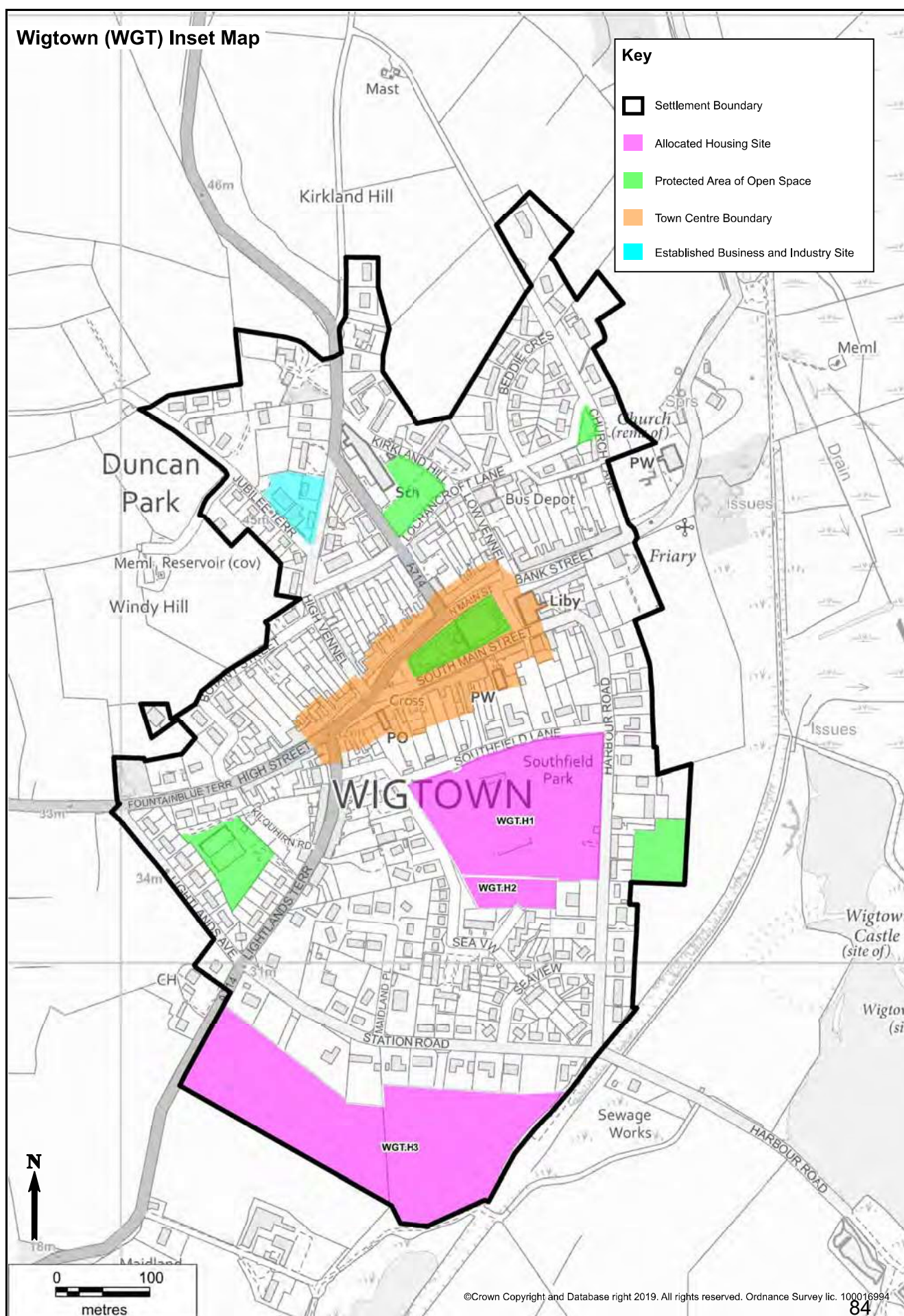
Information was shared regarding the Scottish Government guide for families and communities in relation to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended and paper copies distributed.

The meeting was brought to a close.









SUMMARY SHEET

SUMMARY OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IA)

Policy	Review of Education Provision – St Ninian’s RC Primary School	Date of IA	07/08/2025
Lead service	Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing	Contact person for process	Louise Rae – School Estate Specialist

Names & Job Titles of those involved in process

John Thin - Head of Education Resources
 Louise Rae – School Estate Specialist
 Melinda Dolan - Ward Officer

Summary of IA

The Council is required to publish the findings and results of all IAs conducted. The publication should include a summary of the following:

Research and data (section 3) What was used to assess the impact of the policy and a summary of the findings? Who was involved and consulted during the assessment stage? What were the findings from the consultation and how was this information used to develop the policy?	As part of the statutory consultation process in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended, a consultation period of no less than 30 school term days was included with the following actions Pupil engagement sessions, public survey, public meeting. An extensive list of consultees as set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended were contacted. Pupil data is available from Dumfries and Galloway Council’s SEEMiS data, NHS birth rate data and National Records of Scotland projections. The Catholic Church were also contacted to ascertain number of children baptised in the diocese associated with St Ninian’s RC Primary School during a 10 year period. There has been extensive pre-engagement with the communities of St Ninian’s RC Primary School. A report was presented to Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 10 December 2024 with regard to this and the findings of this process - https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6132 Item 11.
Impact Assessment (section 4) From the summary table at number 32 list the impacts.	Positive Impact(s) – 4 (Age, Religion or belief, Human Rights and Children’s Rights) No Impact(s) – 14 (Disability, Sex, Gender reassignment and Transgender, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Sexual orientation, Care Experienced Young People, British Sign

	Language Users, Armed Forces and Veterans, Health and Wellbeing and Health Inequalities, Poverty, Economic and Social Sustainability and Consumer Duty) Negative Impact(s) – 3 (Age, Religion and Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Management)
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Summary of actions arising from the Impact Assessment

Transfer details from table at number 33

Actions	Responsibility	Timescale

Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) for Review of Education Provision – St Ninian's RC Primary School

Contents

Introduction	3
1. Which articles of the UNCRC does this policy/measure impact on?	3
2. What impact will your policy/measure have on children's rights?.....	4
3. Will there be different impacts on different groups of children and young people?	4
4. If a negative impact is assessed for any area of rights or any group of children and young people, can you explain why this is necessary and proportionate? What options have you considered to modify the proposal, or mitigate the impact?	5
5. How will the policy/measure give better or further effect to the implementation of the UNCRC in Scotland?	5
6. How have you consulted with relevant stakeholders, including involving children and young people in the development of the policy/measure?	5
7. What evidence have you used to inform your assessment?	7
8. How will the impact of the policy/measure be monitored?	7
9. How will you communicate to children and young people the impact of the policy/measure on their rights?	8
10. Sign & Date.....	
Annex 1 – UNCRC Article Clusters	9
Annex 2 – General Comments	11

Introduction

As set out in Part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Scottish Ministers must keep under consideration whether there are any steps which they could take which would or might secure better or further effect in Scotland of the UNCRC requirements, and if they consider it appropriate to do so, take any of the steps identified by that consideration. Undertaking a CRWIA helps Ministers to fulfil this duty.

There are two key considerations when undertaking a CRWIA:

Participation: The United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) sets out that children have the right to participate in decisions which affect them. When assessing the impacts of the policy/measure, you are recommended to consult with children and young people. You can do this directly, through organisations that represent children and young people or through using existing evidence on the views and experiences of children where relevant. Participation of children and young people should be meaningful and accessible.

Evidence: You are recommended to gather evidence when assessing the impact of the policy/measure on children's rights and also for measuring and evaluating the policy/measure. If you identify any gaps in the evidence base, you can discuss how you will address these with analytical colleagues.

1. Which articles of the UNCRC does this policy/measure impact on?

[CRC Clusters \(unicef-irc.org\)](https://www.unicef-irc.org/)

I General measures of implementation

[Article 4](#) implementation obligations

[Article 41](#) respect for existing standards

[Article 42](#) making Convention widely known

[Article 44\(6\)](#) making reports widely available

II Definition of a child

[Article 1](#)

III General principles

[Article 2](#) non-discrimination

[Article 3\(1\)](#) best interest to be a primary consideration

[Article 3\(3\)](#) standards for institutions services and facilities

[Article 12](#) respect for the views of the child

IV Civil rights and freedoms

[Article 8](#) preservation of child's identity

[Article 14](#) freedom of thought, conscience and religion

VI Basic health and welfare

[Article 18\(3\)](#) support for working parents

[Article 23](#) rights of disabled children

VII Education, leisure and cultural activities

[Article 28](#) right to education

[Article 29](#) aims of education

[Article 31](#) right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities

2. What impact will your policy/measure have on children's rights?

Positive – There are strong educational benefits to pupils attending their non-denominational school as clearly demonstrated in the educational benefits statement that underpins the Proposal Paper in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Negative – This potential change to education provision removes the Roman Catholic Primary School from Newton Stewart.

3. Will there be different impacts on different groups of children and young people?

The biggest impact is on those children wishing to access a Roman Catholic education. At the time the school was mothballed a very small number of the children identified as Roman Catholic. All children successfully transitioned into non-denominational schools of their choice.

Dumfries and Galloway Council recognises that there are a small number of children who are baptised through the Roman Catholic Church that reside within the catchment area of St Ninian's RC Primary School. If these children wish to attend St Joseph's RC Primary School they will be supported with transport inline with Dumfries and Galloway Council's School Transport Policy. It is recognised that the travel distance involved are not insignificant and Dumfries and Galloway Council will therefore endeavour to support families in the Roman Catholic education of their children including where necessary Sacramental preparations.

The Roman Catholic Church recognises that there are very low numbers of children baptised in the Roman Catholic Church and support the closure of the school.

4. If a negative impact is assessed for any area of rights or any group of children and young people, can you explain why this is necessary and proportionate? What options have you considered to modify the proposal, or mitigate the impact?

Article 14 freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The potential closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School removes the Roman Catholic School from Newton Stewart, denominational education remains in Dumfries and Galloway however this will increase travel times.

The potential closure does not remove a child's right to education nor does it remove their freedom of religion.

5. How will the policy/measure give better or further effect to the implementation of the UNCRC in Scotland?

This will inform Scottish Ministers' duty to report to Parliament on children's rights under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

6. How have you consulted with relevant stakeholders, including involving children and young people in the development of the policy/measure?

The consultation for St Ninian's RC Primary School has been undertaken inline with St Ninian's RC Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

The Proposal Paper was made was made available on Dumfries and Galloway Council's website:

www.dumgal.gov.uk/consultations

A summary of that document was also provided to the following consultees:

- a. The Parent Council of St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- b. The Parents/carers of pupils within the current St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area;
- c. The Parents/carers of pupils attending St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- d. The parents/carers of any children expected to attend St Ninian's RC Primary School or St Joseph's RC Primary School within two years of the date of publication;
- e. The pupils of St Joseph's RC Primary School (considered to be of a suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal);
- f. The staff (teaching and other) at St Joseph's RC Primary School;
- g. Trade union representatives;

- h. Cairnryan Community Council, Kirkmaiden Community Council, Lochans Community Council, Stoneykirk Community Council, Stranraer, Ochtreure and Belmont Community Council, Castle Kennedy Community Council, Cree Valley Community Council, Isle of Whithorn Community Council, Kirkcowan Community Council, Kirkmabreck Community Council, New Luce Community Council, Old Luce Community Council, Port William and District Community Council and Royal Burgh of Wigtown and District Community Council;
- i. Parish Priest, Fr William R. McFadden
- j. Crichton Campus Leadership Group (Dumfries and Galloway Council, Dumfries and Galloway College, South of Scotland Enterprise, Scottish Funding Council, SRUC Barony College, University of West of Scotland, Glasgow University, Open University, NHS Dumfries and Galloway);
- k. Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland;
- l. Chief Executive, NHS Dumfries and Galloway;
- m. Area Commander Dumfries and Galloway, Fire Scotland.

The Proposal Paper and summary document along with key dates were shared via email with Education Scotland, Ward 1 and 2 Elected Members and Dumfries and Galloway Council Ward Officers.

A hard copy of the full Proposal Paper was also made available at the following locations:

- DG Customer Services, Newton Stewart
- Ryan Centre, Stranraer
- Dumfries and Galloway Council Headquarters

The document was made available in alternative formats or languages as requested.

The consultation period ran from 10 March 2025 to 9 May 2025 at 5pm, which is over the minimum requirement of at least 30 school days, as required by Section 6(4) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

A public meeting was held at Penninghame Primary School on 15 May 2025 at 6pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate was welcome to do so. Advanced notice of this meeting was sent to all consultees in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and advertised in the local press, The Galloway Gazette and the Free Press. The meeting was convened by Dumfries and Galloway Council Officers from the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing directorate supported by an Officer from Planning and Development (Economy and Infrastructure Directorate). The reason for bringing the proposal forward were

presented followed by an opportunity for questions, discussions and comments. A summary note of this meeting is attached at Appendix 4.

The proposal to close St Ninian's RC Primary School could have an impact on pupils, parents/ carers and the local community. Pupils' views are a significant part of the consultation process. To that regard, where possible pupils from the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area took part in focus groups alongside their peers at both Penninghame Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary School, with a Quality and Improvement Officer from the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing directorate.

The focus group at St Ninian's RC Primary School consisted of eight pupils from Primary 3 to Primary 7, including two pupils who previously attended St Ninian's RC Primary School, and was held on 30 April 2025.

The focus group at St Joseph's RC Primary School consisted of six pupils from Primary 4 to Primary 7 and was held on 30 April 2025.

Primary pupils at both Penninghame Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary School, deemed to be of suitable age and maturity to be able to communicate a view on the proposal, were given information regarding Dumfries and Galloway Council's proposal. Pupils were offered an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas through a series of questions and have these recorded as part of the consultation process.

7. What evidence have you used to inform your assessment?

The following work or evidence was utilised as part of this process –

- Historical data including analysis.
- Forecast numbers/trends with evidence from existing information management systems, NHS data and data received from the baptismal records from the parishes of Sacred Heart, St Martin and St Ninian and Our Lady and St Ninian)
- The preliminary requirements phase of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 was undertaken (despite only being applicable to rural schools, St Ninian's RC Primary School is classified as urban) to ensure all accurate information was ascertained before entering into the statutory consultation phase.
- Full consultation as defined in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
- Direct engagement with pupils of the affected schools, including a non-denominational school on the same site as St Ninian's RC Primary School and pupils that previously attended St Ninian's RC Primary School.

8. How will the impact of the policy/measure be monitored?

Pupils have all transferred to non-denominational primary schools in their local area or onto secondary school. Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to ensuring through their strategic outcomes that;

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

Pupils that previously attended St Ninian's RC Primary School have been supported in their transition to other schools.

9. How will you communicate to children and young people the impact of the policy/measure on their rights?

A final decision on St Ninian's RC Primary School will be made on 9/9/2025 by members of Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee, the outcome of this decision will be cascaded to all consultees, including pupils through Headteachers of the affected schools.

Annex 1 – UNCRC Article Clusters

[CRC Clusters \(unicef-irc.org\)](https://www.unicef-irc.org/)

I General measures of implementation

[Article 4](#) implementation obligations

[Article 41](#) respect for existing standards

[Article 42](#) making Convention widely known

[Article 44\(6\)](#) making reports widely available

II Definition of a child

[Article 1](#)

III General principles

[Article 2](#) non-discrimination

[Article 3\(1\)](#) best interest to be a primary consideration

[Article 3\(2\)](#) State's obligations to ensure necessary care and protection

[Article 3\(3\)](#) standards for institutions services and facilities

[Article 6](#) the right to life, survival and development (see also: [VI Basic health and welfare](#))

[Article 12](#) respect for the views of the child

IV Civil rights and freedoms

[Article 7](#) right to name, nationality and to know and be cared for by parents

[Article 8](#) preservation of child's identity

[Article 13](#) freedom of expression

[Article 14](#) freedom of thought, conscience and religion

[Article 15](#) freedom of association and peaceful assembly

[Article 16](#) protection of privacy

[Article 17](#) child's access to information, and role of mass media

[Article 37\(a\) right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#)

V Family environment and alternative care

[Article 5](#) parental guidance and child's evolving capacities

[Article 18\(1\) and \(2\)](#) parental responsibilities and State's assistance

[Article 9](#) separation from parents

[Article 10](#) family reunification

[Article 11](#) illicit transfer and non-return

[Article 27\(4\)](#) recovery of maintenance for the child

[Article 20 children deprived of their family environment](#)

[Article 21 adoption](#)

[Article 25](#) periodic review of placement and treatment

[Article 19](#) protection from all forms of violence

[Article 39](#) rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of violence (see also: [VIII - Special protection measures](#))

VI Basic health and welfare

[Article 6](#) right to life, survival and development (see also: [III - General principles](#))

[Article 18\(3\)](#) support for working parents

[Article 23](#) rights of disabled children

[Article 24](#) right to health and health services

[Article 26](#) right to social security

[Article 27\(1\)-\(3\)](#) right to adequate standard of living

VII Education, leisure and cultural activities

[Article 28](#) right to education

[Article 29](#) aims of education

[Article 31](#) right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities

VIII Special protection measures

A - Children in situations of emergency

[Article 22](#) refugee children

[Article 38](#) children and armed conflict

[Article 39](#) rehabilitation of child victims (see also: [V Family environment and alternative care](#))

B - Children involved with the system of administration of juvenile justice

[Article 40](#) [administration of juvenile justice](#)

[Article 37\(a\)](#) [prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment](#)

[Article 37\(b\)-\(d\)](#) [restriction of liberty](#)

[Article 39](#) rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims (see also: [V Family environment and alternative care](#))

C - Children in situations of exploitation

[Article 32](#) child labour

[Article 33](#) drug abuse

[Article 34](#) sexual exploitation

[Article 35](#) sale, trafficking and abduction

[Article 36](#) other forms of exploitation

D - Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group

[Article 30](#)

[Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict](#)

[Governments](#) should ensure that children under 18 who are members of the armed forces do not take a part in combat. Any recruitment of children under 18 must be voluntary and carried out with the full consent of the child's parents/carers. The UK Government has entered interpretive Declarations to this Optional Protocol. The UK would not exclude the deployment of under 18s who are members of the armed forces in direct combat if there is a genuine military need; it is not practicable to withdraw them before deployment; or doing so would undermine the operational effectiveness of their unit. The minimum age at which children may join the UK armed forces is 16 years, with parental consent required.

[Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography](#) [Governments](#) must prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and

child pornography, and recognise the vulnerability of child victims, protect their privacy, provide appropriate support services and ensure their safety.

Annex 2 – General Comments

General Comments are non-legally binding interpretive aids issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to provide State parties with assistance regarding the interpretation of an article or issue relating to the UNCRC, and what actions governments should take to ensure its implementation. New General Comments appear at irregular intervals.

[Treaty bodies Search \(ohchr.org\)](#)

1. [The aims of education \(2001\)](#)
2. [The role of independent National Human Rights Institutions in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child \(2002\)](#)
3. [HIV/AIDS and the rights of children \(2003\)](#)
4. [Adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child \(2003\)](#)
5. [General measures of implementation on the Convention on the Rights of the Child \(2003\)](#)
6. [Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin \(2005\)](#)
7. [Implementing child rights in early childhood \(2005\)](#)
8. [The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment \(2006\)](#)
9. [The rights of children with disabilities \(2006\)](#)
10. [Children's rights in juvenile justice \(2007\)](#)
11. [Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention \(2009\)](#)
12. [The right of the child to be heard \(2009\)](#)
13. [The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence \(2011\)](#)
14. [On the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration \(2013\)](#)
15. [On the right of the child to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health \(2013\)](#)
16. [State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights \(2013\)](#)
17. [On the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts \(2013\)](#)

18. [On harmful practices \(Joint General Comment with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women\) \(2019\)](#)
19. [Public budgeting for the realisation of children's rights \(2016\)](#)
20. [Implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence \(2016\)](#)
21. [Children in street situations \(2017\)](#)
22. General principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration [\(Joint General Comment with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families\) \(2017\)](#)
23. State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return [\(Joint General Comment with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families\) \(2017\)](#)
24. [General comment No. 24 \(2019\)](#) on children's rights in the child justice system
25. [General comment 25 \(2021\)](#) Children's Rights in relation to the digital environment.

FW

Fr [REDACTED]
To [REDACTED]

😊

↩ Reply

↩ Reply All

➡ Forward

📧

⋮

Mon 05/05/2025 18:17

🛡 Official

📘

You forwarded this message on 06/05/2025 18:06.
Click here to download pictures. To help protect your privacy, Outlook prevented automatic download of some pictures in this message.

OFFICIAL

[REDACTED]

Thank you for your email. [REDACTED] I am aware that there were insufficient numbers of Roman Catholic children being enrolled in St Ninians Primary School, Newton Stewart, to ensure its viability. I can therefore see the necessity of the proposal being presented.

[REDACTED]

Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)

OFFICIAL

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 1, 2025 1:40:56 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject:

OFFICIAL

Good Afternoon [REDACTED]
I wanted to take the opportunity to bring to your attention the statutory consultation process we are undertaking with regard to St Ninian's RC Primary School.
You should have received all the communication circulated to date as a consultee.

Link to St Ninian's RC Primary School consultation webpage - <https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/27347/Review-of-Education-Provision-St-Ninian-s-RC-Primary-School-Statutory-Consultation>

The consultation period closes on Friday 9th May 2025 at 5pm. If you would like to make representation prior to this deadline there is an online survey alternatively you can email any comments/thoughts/statement directly back to myself.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
Dumfries
DG1 2HR
Drop Point: 207

Tel: [REDACTED]
Mobile: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]
Web: www.dumgal.gov.uk



RESPONSE from [REDACTED] on Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee.

Review of Education Provision Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing St Ninian's RC Primary School, Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Much discussion has already taken place on this subject and so this response is in effect a summing up.

The Catholic Church accepts that the situation regarding St Ninian's RC Primary Newton Stewart is as stated in the consultation document viz:

- St Ninian's RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for nineteen months (correct March 2025), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in Dumfries and Galloway has fallen by 34% between the census of 2011 and 2022.
- Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and principal teacher for St Ninian's RC Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment. The annual cost of mothballing the building is £7,039.28.

The Church therefore has no formal objection to the closure of St Ninian's following on from the mothballing period. However the rights to Catholic education remain unchanged as regards Religious Education.

We would therefore expect that within the formal process that there is a clause **formally** stating the right of any Catholic family, either resident now or in the future, to receive Catholic Religious Education including where necessary Sacramental preparation.

Section 22d of the 1980 Education (Scotland) Act require that the Council must protect this provision.

In the past in other Council areas this has meant that those families opting for RERC have had either a Catholic teacher within the school deliver this, OR, a peripatetic teacher who would visit schools to deliver.

22D Further provisions relating to denominational schools.

(5) The Secretary of State shall not grant consent under this section in relation to a school unless he is satisfied that adequate arrangements have been made for the religious instruction of the children who will no longer receive or be likely to receive school education in a school of the kind referred to in subsection (2)(a) above.

(6) In granting consent under this section in relation to a school the Secretary of State may impose

such conditions as he thinks fit with regard to the religious instruction of the children who will no longer receive or be likely to receive school education in a school of the kind referred to in subsection (2)(a) above and to related matters and, in doing so, he shall have regard to the duties imposed by section 21 of this Act on education authorities in relation to schools of that kind, and conditions imposed by the Secretary of State under this section may be revoked or amended by him at any time.

This requirement is necessary since although the catchment area for St Joseph's Stranraer will now be expanded to include the area formerly covered by St Ninian's, it is unlikely that pupils will travel to St Joseph's and as a result pupils will enrol at Penninghame Primary as the nearest non-denominational Primary. As I understand it, this is what happened after mothballing was suggested.

St Ninian's RC Primary School Statutory Consultation Survey

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process, to discontinue education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School which is currently mothballed and re-align its catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School. It is proposed that education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School be discontinued with effect from 1 December 2025.

The consultation period is from 10 March until 5pm on 9 May 2025.

All responses received will be redacted and shared with Education Scotland as required by section 8(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:	
Do you agree to your name and any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process and published in the final Consultation Report? (Please note all other personal information will be redacted)	
Yes ☐ No ☐	
Name: (please print)	Address:
	Post Code:
Signature:	Date:
Please select from the following:	
Parent/Carer ☐	Community Organisation ☐
Pupil ☐	Community Member ☐
Member of Staff ☐	Other:
What is your present religion, if any?	
Do you have a primary aged pupil or younger child(ren) in your family?	
Yes ☐ No ☐	
Please detail their year group (or month and year of birth) and the school or nursery (where applicable) they attend below.	

Do you support the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If the closure on St Ninian's RC Primary School goes ahead, the proposal is that the denominational catchment area will be realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer), there will be no changes to any other catchment areas.

Do you support this change in catchment area or do you have an alternative proposal that Dumfries and Galloway Council should take into consideration?

- ☐ Catchment area realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer)
- ☐ Alternative proposal

Please explain your alternative proposal.

Please detail below any comments you may have regarding the proposal for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School (please continue on the reverse if you require additional space).

Please leave your email address below if you would like us to include you in our distribution list regarding the Statutory Consultation of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

Please hand any completed forms to a member of Dumfries and Galloway Council staff or return by post or email to:

Statutory Consultation – St Ninian's RC Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk

Let us know what you think by 5pm on Friday 9 May 2025.

View results

Respondent

1

Anonymous

04:25

Time to complete

1

Do you agree to your response and any statement/comments being published in the final Consultation Report as part of the Statutory Consultation process? (Please note all personal information will be redacted) *

☒ Yes

☐ No

2

Please detail your name below. *

3

Please detail your full address including postcode below. *

4

The catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School is made up of 9 non-denominational primary school catchment areas (as detailed below) please indicate which catchment area you live in (please choose one option)?

You can check your catchment area using the Near Me link below and inserting your postcode into the interactive map.

<https://nearme-dumgal.hub.arcgis.com/> *

- ☐ Creetown Primary School
- ☐ Garlieston Primary School
- ☐ Kirkcowan Primary School
- ☐ Kirkinner Primary School
- ☒ Minnigaff Primary School
- ☐ Penninghame Primary School
- ☐ Port William Primary School
- ☐ Whithorn Primary School
- ☐ Wigtown Primary School
- ☐ Other

5

What is your present religion, if any? *

None

6

Are you *

- ☒ Parent/Carer
- ☐ Pupil
- ☐ Member of Staff
- ☐ Community Organisation
- ☐ Community Member
- ☐ Other

7

Do you have a primary aged pupil or younger child(ren) in your family? *

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

8

Please detail their year group (or month and year of birth) and the school or nursery (where applicable) they attend below. *

P3

Do you support the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School? *

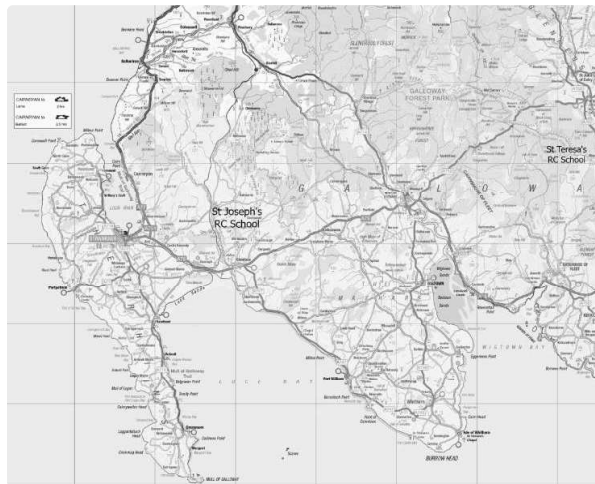
☒ Yes

☐ No

10

If the closure on St Ninian's RC Primary School goes ahead, the proposal is that the denominational catchment area will be realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer), there will be no changes to any other catchment areas.

Do you support this change in catchment area or do you have an alternative proposal that Dumfries and Galloway Council should take into consideration?



*

☒ Catchment area realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer)

☐ Alternative proposal

11

Please detail below any comments you may have regarding the proposal for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

The building should be part of Penninghame Primary as they are limited in space and would be a great space for them to utilise.

Please leave your email address below if you would like us to include you in our distribution list regarding the Statutory Consultation of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

View results

Respondent

2

Anonymous

04:46

Time to complete

1

Do you agree to your response and any statement/comments being published in the final Consultation Report as part of the Statutory Consultation process? (Please note all personal information will be redacted) *

☒ Yes

☐ No

2

Please detail your name below. *

[REDACTED]

3

Please detail your full address including postcode below. *

[REDACTED]

The catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School is made up of 9 non-denominational primary school catchment areas (as detailed below) please indicate which catchment area you live in (please choose one option)?

You can check your catchment area using the Near Me link below and inserting your postcode into the interactive map.

<https://nearme-dumgal.hub.arcgis.com/> *

- ☒ Creetown Primary School
- ☐ Garlieston Primary School
- ☐ Kirkcowan Primary School
- ☐ Kirkinner Primary School
- ☐ Minnigaff Primary School
- ☐ Penninghame Primary School
- ☐ Port William Primary School
- ☐ Whithorn Primary School
- ☐ Wigtown Primary School
- ☐ Other

What is your present religion, if any? *

None

6

Are you *

- ☒ Parent/Carer
- ☐ Pupil
- ☐ Member of Staff
- ☐ Community Organisation
- ☐ Community Member
- ☐ Other

7

Do you have a primary aged pupil or younger child(ren) in your family? *

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

8

Please detail their year group (or month and year of birth) and the school or nursery (where applicable) they attend below. *

7&5 creetown

Do you support the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School? *

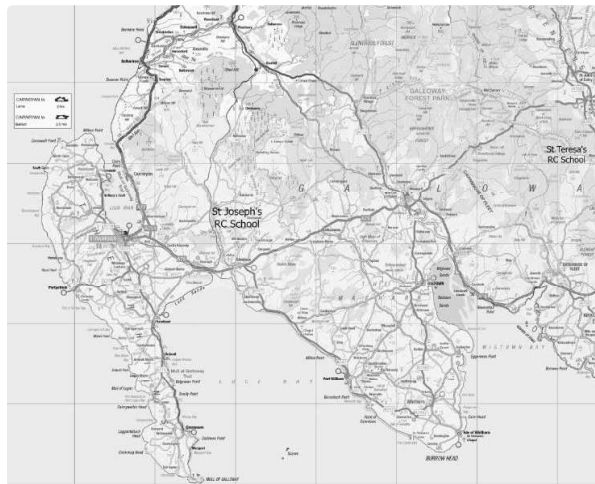
☒ Yes

☐ No

10

If the closure on St Ninian's RC Primary School goes ahead, the proposal is that the denominational catchment area will be realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer), there will be no changes to any other catchment areas.

Do you support this change in catchment area or do you have an alternative proposal that Dumfries and Galloway Council should take into consideration?



*

☒ Catchment area realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer)

☐ Alternative proposal

11

Please detail below any comments you may have regarding the proposal for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

Certainly close this school. A drain on resources which could be used elsewhere. Less pupils = less school places = less requirement for schools.

Please leave your email address below if you would like us to include you in our distribution list regarding the Statutory Consultation of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

View results

Respondent

5

Anonymous

03:15

Time to complete

1

Do you agree to your response and any statement/comments being published in the final Consultation Report as part of the Statutory Consultation process? (Please note all personal information will be redacted) *

☒ Yes

☐ No

2

Please detail your name below. *

[REDACTED]

3

Please detail your full address including postcode below. *

[REDACTED]

4

The catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School is made up of 9 non-denominational primary school catchment areas (as detailed below) please indicate which catchment area you live in (please choose one option)?

You can check your catchment area using the Near Me link below and inserting your postcode into the interactive map.

<https://nearme-dumgal.hub.arcgis.com/> *

- ☐ Creetown Primary School
- ☐ Garlieston Primary School
- ☐ Kirkcowan Primary School
- ☐ Kirkinner Primary School
- ☐ Minnigaff Primary School
- ☒ Penninghame Primary School
- ☐ Port William Primary School
- ☐ Whithorn Primary School
- ☐ Wigtown Primary School
- ☐ Other

5

What is your present religion, if any? *

n/a RC

6

Are you *

- ☒ Parent/Carer
- ☐ Pupil
- ☐ Member of Staff
- ☐ Community Organisation
- ☐ Community Member
- ☐ Other

7

Do you have a primary aged pupil or younger child(ren) in your family? *

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

8

Please detail their year group (or month and year of birth) and the school or nursery (where applicable) they attend below. *

Oct 22 - currently at Minnigaff Nursery as there is no space at Penninghame

9

Do you support the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

10

If the closure on St Ninian's RC Primary School goes ahead, the proposal is that the denominational catchment area will be realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer), there will be no changes to any other catchment areas.

Do you support this change in catchment area or do you have an alternative proposal that Dumfries and Galloway Council should take into consideration?

*



☐ Catchment area realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer)

☒ Alternative proposal

11

Please use the box below to explain your alternative proposal. *

I don't drive and can't send a 5 year old on a bus to Stranraer!

12

Please detail below any comments you may have regarding the proposal for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

There is not enough space at Penninghame to allow all children in NS to attend from 2 years old.
We would rather attend St Ninian's RC Primary. There is no choice.

13

Please leave your email address below if you would like us to include you in our distribution list regarding the Statutory Consultation of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

6

Anonymous

05:31

Time to complete

1

Do you agree to your response and any statement/comments being published in the final Consultation Report as part of the Statutory Consultation process? (Please note all personal information will be redacted) *

☒ Yes

☐ No

2

Please detail your name below. *

3

Please detail your full address including postcode below. *

4

The catchment area for St Ninian's RC Primary School is made up of 9 non-denominational primary school catchment areas (as detailed below) please indicate which catchment area you live in (please choose one option)?

You can check your catchment area using the Near Me link below and inserting your postcode into the interactive map.

<https://nearme-dumgal.hub.arcgis.com/> *

- ☐ Creetown Primary School
- ☐ Garlieston Primary School
- ☐ Kirkcowan Primary School
- ☐ Kirkinner Primary School
- ☐ Minnigaff Primary School
- ☒ Penninghame Primary School
- ☐ Port William Primary School
- ☐ Whithorn Primary School
- ☐ Wigtown Primary School
- ☐ Other

5

What is your present religion, if any? *

Christian Church of Scotland

6

Are you *

- ☒ Parent/Carer
- ☐ Pupil
- ☐ Member of Staff
- ☐ Community Organisation
- ☐ Community Member
- ☐ Other

7

Do you have a primary aged pupil or younger child(ren) in your family? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No

8

Do you support the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

9

If the closure on St Ninian's RC Primary School goes ahead, the proposal is that the denominational catchment area will be realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer), there will be no changes to any other catchment areas.

Do you support this change in catchment area or do you have an alternative proposal that Dumfries and Galloway Council should take into consideration?

*



☒ Catchment area realigned with St Joseph's RC Primary School (Stranraer)

☐ Alternative proposal

10

Please detail below any comments you may have regarding the proposal for the closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

Could st Ninians school be turned into a support bace or school for those with additional support needs? There isn't enough support for people with additional support needs in the area and this could help to provide that support.

11

Please leave your email address below if you would like us to include you in our distribution list regarding the Statutory Consultation of St Ninian's RC Primary School.

PUBLIC MEETING – ST NINIAN’S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL STATUTORY CONSULTATION

Penninghame Primary School, 15 April 2025, 6pm

Officers present: John Thin – Head of Education Resources (JT), Louise Rae – School Estate Specialist (LR), Kevin Williamson – Education Support Officer (KW) (Note taker), Shona McCoy – Team Leader Development Planning (SM), Leona Wallace (Headteacher – Penninghame P.S)

HM Inspector Education Scotland: Kath Crombie

Local Councillor: Cllr Katie Hagman

Stakeholders: 1

JT welcomed everyone to the meeting and covered housekeeping arrangements. JT introduced Dumfries and Galloway Council officers present.

Despite the low turn out to the meeting officers must still capture that the meeting has taken place.

JT outlined the process and key aspects of the proposal highlighting the proposed catchment area realignment to St Joseph’s RC Primary School.

JT explained the reason for the for proposal:

- St Ninian’s RC Primary School has been formally mothballed for nineteen months (correct March 2025), with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. The school roll is not forecast to rise in the near future.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Number of children aged 0-14 identifying as Roman Catholic in Dumfries and Galloway has fallen by 34% between the census’ of 2011 and 2022.
- Challenges recruiting a Roman Catholic (or approved through the Roman Catholic Church) Headteacher and Principal Teacher for St Ninian’s RC Primary School. Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.
- Whilst the school is mothballed, the building is deteriorating with limited budgets for repairs, maintenance and capital investment. The annual cost of mothballing the building is £7,039.28.

Proposal will recommend end of provision as of 1st of December 2025.

JT encouraged all stakeholders to make representation and that QR codes and paper copies of the survey at the sign in desk. The views of community members will be recorded through discussion this evening and survey

submission available electronically and in paper format. The end of the consultation period was brought to everyone's attention - Friday 9th May at 5pm.

JT opened the conversation to the floor.

Stakeholder: If the school is sold, where would the boundary line be for Penninghame? Perimeter fence and access for pick up and drop off? Could that be looked at?

Officer response: This question came up at pre-consultation, Officers first have to complete the stat con process before looking at future purpose of the building and the Council may have a use for St Ninian's RC Primary School. However, Dumfries and Galloway Council would include prioritisation of pupils attending Penninghame Primary School and work around how the day-to-day running of Penninghame Primary School to avoid any impact on for pupils and staff.

Cllr Hagman: There have been lots of questions about the use of the school. It's been captured in the previous meeting and not captured in the stat con, but is this feedback included? There has been good engagement previous to today and stakeholders have had the opportunity to contribute their feedback to the process to date.

Officer response: Included in the proposal paper is a pre-consultation report that summarised the responses that came through that initial phase of the process, and given that not many have engaged in today's meeting and due to the minimal representations to date, then the feedback from the pre-consultation phase will be used in the final consultation report..

JT confirmed there were no further statements or questions and thanked all for attending and their input. Those present were encouraged to complete the survey available by scanning the QR code or completing the paper copy of the survey, available at the sign in desk. The final date and time for completion is 5pm on Friday 9 May 2025.

JT thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 6:26pm.

Pupil Consultation – School Closure	
Date of visit	30 th April 2025
School for proposed closure	St Ninian's RC Primary School
Member of staff leading discussion	David Maxwell, Quality Improvement Officer
Pupils involved (school, number and stage)	Penninghame Primary School 2 x P3 2 x P5 2 x P6 2 x P7 (two pupils included in the focus group previously attended St Ninian's RC)
Background information	- I am meeting with you today because Dumfries and Galloway Council would like your views on the potential closure of St Ninian's RC Primary School. - This consultation is anonymous, which means your views and thoughts might be used in reports and discussions which are public, but your names won't be written alongside your views and ideas. - We want to consult with you to find out what you think of the Council's proposal to close St Ninian's RC Primary School. The Council are proposing this because: - the number of pupils at St Ninian's RC Primary School dropped below 10. - the Council believe pupils will get a better educational experience in a larger school with more children. - It is important that we get your views because we want to hear what it is like at Penninghame Primary School. Any children living in and around Newton Stewart who wish to attend a Roman Catholic school will now need to travel to St Joseph's Primary School, but we know that most have chosen to attend Penninghame Primary School. - Your views will help the Council make its decision.
If you went to St Ninian's RC Primary School, can you tell us some of the good things about going there?	I liked the inside play area. Easy for the teachers to get round everybody, less children in class.
Can you tell us some of the good things about attending Penninghame Primary School?	Teachers are really nice here, they help you with your work. Technology – we get maths games, ipads, laptops.

	Outdoor learning, lots of activities which can link to maths, chalk on playground. Like maths – teachers know what level you are working at so it helps teach us more. Lunches taste good. Big playground with lots of do. Like playing on trim trail. Lots to play with outside, hula-hoops, chess, basketball. Everyone is nice, teachers deal with anything that goes wrong. The kinds of writing we do – imaginary topics. The way that classes are organised, we work with lots of different people and mix together.
What do you think might be an advantage of a larger school?	Lots of resources in a bigger school, access to lots of materials, games and equipment, art resources. You wouldn't have this in a small school. More people, more chances to make friends with more people. Bigger classes mean that there are more people to work with, more choices of where and who to sit with.
What do you think might be some disadvantages of a larger school?	Big schools are more busy. Some people don't like it when it is too busy. There might be busy places in the school – bathrooms, lunch queue. Might be harder to get help if there are more people needing help from the teacher at the same time. Share the textbooks and resources more – there might not be enough to go around with bigger numbers Harder to 'get your turn' – more people might be in-front of you.
What do you think might be an advantage of a smaller school?	You don't need as many teachers to teach in a small school. You don't need as many resources. Resources won't run out as fast – glue stick. Lunch line would be quicker.
What do you think might be some disadvantages of a smaller school?	If there were less people in school and then people moved the small school might get closed down. You'd have to move and make new friends – more changes.

	Less people to play with in the playground. Wouldn't have the chance to make as many friends. Would have as many materials and resources to use, less PE equipment. It might get boring with less people. There would be less classes.
What do you think about St Ninian's RC Primary School possibly closing?	Sad, I was only there for 1 year, I didn't get much time there. It could be sad for the children that went there. It feels the same here at Penninghame, just more people here. More things can come to Penninghame if we have more children, more people and more money.
How do you feel about children from other catchment areas/schools attending Penninghame Primary School in the future?	Happy that other children have come here. Gives us more children to talk and play with. Gives children from the smaller school an opportunity to be part of something bigger and busier.
Is there anything you think the Council should consider before making its final decision?	Need to think about how other people are feeling. Need to talk to parents, talk to the community – local people. Need to think about what should happen to the building. Can we use it at Penninghame? We could extend the Learning Centre, it could become a 'quiet' place in school with chairs, blankets for us to have time out of class, it could be a library area or an indoor play area.
Anything else?	

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dumfries and Galloway Council to discontinue education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School and re-align its catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School.

May 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of a proposal by Dumfries and Galloway Council to discontinue education provision at St Ninian's RC Primary School and re-align its catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act. Where a council is proposing to close a school, there are specific additional obligations. These include notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the school; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 15 April 2025 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of St Joseph's RC Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Dumfries and Galloway Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The consultation ran from 10 March to 9 May 2025. A public meeting was held on 15 April 2025 in Penninghame Primary School. Copies of the proposal paper were published on the council's website and were also available through various council offices. The council also conducted a pre-consultation phase in order to seek the views of the local community. There were

eight responses to the public consultation. Almost all agreed with the council's proposal to close the school on a permanent basis. Only one member of the public attended the public meeting. A few stakeholders queried what use the building would be put to and how the council would avoid disruption to Penningham Primary School during any change. A few stakeholders asked that the site be added to Penningham Primary School to increase the school's capacity and facilities.

2.3 The council ran pupil consultations with children at Penninghame and St Joseph's Primary Schools. Children expressed positive views about being part of both small and larger schools. A few children at Penninghame Primary School queried if the St Ninian's RC Primary School rooms could become part of the facilities at their school to extend quiet spaces. A few children at St Joseph's RC Primary School are concerned that journeys for those coming to their school from the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area could be long.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 St Ninian's RC Primary School was mothballed in 2023 following the school roll falling, with no pupils in attendance since August 2023. This reflects school rolls reducing across Dumfries and Galloway. A further drop of around 18 percent is predicted in school rolls across the council over the next ten years. Prior to this the council discussed options with parents of the children at the school. In its proposal the council outlines their consideration of alternatives to closure. These included continuing to mothball the school and reopening the school. Following the informal consultation, the council felt that neither of these were viable and there was little prospect of the school roll at St Ninian's RC Primary School increasing in the near future. St Ninian's RC Primary School shares a site with Penninghame Primary School within Newton Stewart.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree that if the proposal to permanently close St Ninian's RC Primary School is agreed, that realigning the catchment area to St Joseph's RC Primary School is sensible. Whilst children are attending a local non-denominational school, it is important that the council has included in its proposal how children, who would have attended St Ninian's RC Primary School, can still access a Catholic education. St Joseph's RC Primary School has capacity to accept any children from the St Ninian's RC Primary School area. HM inspectors agree that the council has taken reasonable steps to enable children to access a Catholic education at St Joseph's RC Primary School.

3.3 The council sets out the educational benefits in its proposal. These include that the children who would have attended St Ninian's RC Primary School will receive a more diverse curriculum and a wider range of learning experiences at St Joseph's RC Primary School. They state that at St Joseph's RC Primary School children have opportunities to develop skills through engagement in the life of the school community. For example, through pupil committees and community links. Children are settled in the schools they have attended since St Ninian's RC Primary School was mothballed. HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits to this proposal.

3.4 Children, parents and staff at St Joseph's RC Primary School that spoke to HM Inspectors all agree that St Ninian's RC Primary School should close permanently. They recognise that numbers attending the school prior to mothballing were very low and that St Joseph's RC Primary School provides a positive educational experience. Parents and staff feel that St Joseph's RC Primary School has a strong tradition of providing a Catholic education with good links to church and community. Children are positive about having new children join their school. Children enjoy the opportunities for learning outside of the classroom that St Joseph's RC Primary School provides.

3.5 HM Inspectors met with a representative of the Catholic Church as part of the consultation and the diocese also submitted a written response. They recognise that attendance at St Ninian's

RC Primary School had fallen substantially in recent years and that there was little prospect of numbers in the catchment area increasing. They have no objection to the permanent closure of the school and the re-aligning of the catchment to St Joseph's RC Primary School. They noted that the right to a Catholic education remains unchanged. Should the proposal be agreed, the diocese have requested that the council include a formal clause stating the right of Catholic families, either now or in the future, to receive Catholic religious education including where necessary, Sacramental preparation.

3.6 The council confirm that transport for children in the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment area will be provided should they decide to attend St Joseph's RC Primary School in future. A few stakeholders were worried about the increased distance that children would have to travel, especially in winter, in order to access Catholic education. For children who now attend local non-denominational school journey times are similar to what they were prior to St Ninian's RC Primary School being mothballed.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits to Dumfries and Galloway Council's proposal to permanently close St Ninian's RC Primary School and re-align the catchment to St Joseph's RC Primary School. Almost all stakeholders agree with the proposal and children are settled at their current schools. It is unlikely that the numbers of school age children that would be in the St Ninian's RC Primary School catchment will increase in the coming years. Falling school rolls mean that this change is largely accepted by stakeholders as a way to continue to provide an option for Catholic education in the area. St Joseph's RC Primary School have capacity and would welcome any children whose parents or carers wish them to go to a denominational school from the area. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should continue to liaise with stakeholders, including the Catholic Church, regarding its implementation. Stakeholders at Penninghame Primary School should be included in discussion about the future use of the site.

HM Inspectors
May 2025