

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Department of Education

### OUTCOME OF THE NORMALISATION PILOT PROCESS

*Published on Friday 22 March 2024.*

**Mr Givan (The Minister of Education):** The following statement details the outcome of the 'normalisation' pilot undertaken by my Department to introduce further agility into the Area Planning process.

There is a need to see an accelerated and more dynamic approach to Area Planning to create a sustainable network of schools that can deliver a broad and balanced curriculum in the best interests of children and young people.

The pilot has aimed to adjust admissions and enrolment numbers of schools where there is a historical pattern of enrolments in excess of a school's approved number.

Thirty-seven schools participated in the pilot. My officials carried out a very detailed and comprehensive analysis exercise to determine the way forward for each individual school. The process was underpinned by robust consultation with input from the schools themselves, other schools in the wider area and the relevant school managing authorities.

I am delighted to announce that I have agreed increased enrolments at 21 schools listed below:

- St Mary's Primary School (PS), Mullmesker;
- St John's PS, Swatragh;
- Kircubbin Integrated PS;
- Loughview Integrated PS;
- Bleary PS;
- Dungannon PS;
- Christian Brothers' PS, Armagh;
- St Brigid's (Drumilly) PS;
- St Mary's PS, Granemore, Armagh;
- Roan, St Patrick's PS, Dungannon;
- St Mary's PS, Aughnacloy;
- St Patrick's PS, Dungannon;
- St Colman's PS, Newry
- Victoria College;
- Dalriada School, Ballymoney;
- Lisnagarvey High School, Lisburn;
- Bangor Academy and 6<sup>th</sup> Form College;
- Markethill High School, Armagh;
- St Paul's High School, Bessbrook, Newry;
- The Royal School, Armagh; and
- St Catherine's College, Armagh.

Above all, this approval brings certainty to these schools and their communities, who can now plan their curriculum, and resources knowing the numbers of children and young people being admitted to their schools annually and without constant recourse to temporary variation requests. This will be a significant benefit to these school communities. Significant time and resources have also been saved and the need for individual Development Proposals avoided.

At the remaining sixteen schools, there are still wider planning issues across the local area which the school managing authorities will work closely with communities to resolve.

It is important that key area planning stakeholders work together to inject further impetus into developing and agreeing sustainable area solutions.

All schools who participated in the pilot process, Managing Authorities, Trustees and Sectoral Support Bodies will be advised of the outcome of the pilot process in writing. Details will also be available on the Department's website.

The education of our children and young people in educationally and financially viable and sustainable schools is a critical issue. There are many challenges which require urgent attention reducing the number of children and young people in unsustainable schools including sixth form provision, matching provision to population trends, ensuring sufficient and appropriate provision for children with special educational needs and improving the quality of provision.