

Proposal to close St. Joseph's Primary School, Caledon.

The Education Authority has proposed closing our school in Caledon by 31 August 2027. **The consultation period is open until Easter. Your voice counts.**

St. Joseph's has been a cornerstone of Catholic education in Caledon for more than a century, serving the community since 1907. In this historic part of our parish, it's more than classrooms. It's where our kids learn to pray, make their first communion, and grow up together. A little piece of home, an essential part of our community.

Attached you will find some suggested bullet points which you might consider including in your email or letter to the Department of Education. Also attached is a pre-typed letter, if you would prefer to sign and post this instead.

Please ensure that your voice is heard by the Department of Education and the Minister. Take a moment to write before Easter. Because if we stay silent, the school might quietly close and we'd lose something that we can never replace.

Address for letters of objection

Objections should be addressed to:

The Area Planning Policy Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor
Co Down
BT19 7PR

Or emailed to: dps@education-ni.gov.uk

** Please note that any letters may be published on the Department of Education's website, with appropriate redactions, if they are included in full in the submission on which the outcome of the proposal is decided. Letters of objection and information supplied to the Department of Education and the Education Authority may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, if requested.*

To assist you in formulating a response, here are some points that you could include in your email or letter to the Department of Education. Feel free to use any of these suggestions, adapt them as needed, or of course convey your own objections in your correspondence.

- Caledon is recognised as one of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland regarding access to essential services. The closure of St. Joseph's Primary School, one of the few local amenities available to residents, would significantly increase that deprivation and adversely affect the community.
- The economic viability of the playschool and the after-school facilities at the purpose-built, fully registered childcare facility at the Wool Store will be severely threatened. This will impact families attending Churchill PS also, as both the playschool and the after-school facility are cross-community. The Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by CCMS did not reflect this.
- There are economic implications for local traders; a reduction in footfall for the village businesses already struggling in the current climate.
- Lower property values are another very real economic risk. Without the service of a local Catholic primary school, the town is less attractive to a significant cohort of potential buyers. Again, the Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by CCMS makes no mention of this risk.
- In recent years Caledon has made significant progress towards a more prosperous, safe and inclusive society. The village now has cross-community playschool and after schools' provisions. It has two well-performing primary schools with strong and very active links. The children travel to the schools on a shared bus, they know their neighbours, they build friendships through these opportunities for direct social interaction that would otherwise not exist. This is hugely important in Caledon.
- We need Caledon to be an inclusive and vibrant community of people, a mixed community providing opportunity for social interaction, promoting tolerance and understanding, continuing to bridge division, continuing to work together for the collective good of the village and its hinterlands. Removing the catholic primary school will affect the number of catholic families either coming to live or continuing to live in Caledon.

Despite the recently approved new housing development, the longer-term outcome for Caledon would be one of an aging demographic in a town where the shutters are down. This is hugely troubling in terms of the future of this village and indeed the parish of Aghaloo and Carnteel.

The Area Planning Policy Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor
Co. Down
BT19 7PR
March 2026

Re: Objection to the Proposed Closure of St. Joseph's Primary School, Caledon

Dear Area Planning Policy Team,

I am writing to formally lodge my objection to the Education Authority's proposal to close St. Joseph's Primary School, Caledon by 31 August 2027. I strongly believe that proceeding with this closure would have deeply damaging and long-lasting consequences for the children, families, and wider community of Caledon.

St. Joseph's has been a cornerstone of education and community life in Caledon since 1907. For generations, it has provided not only excellent education, but a place where children grow, form friendships, and take their first steps in faith and community belonging. In a rural area like ours, a school is far more than a building — it is one of the few essential services we still have. Closing St. Joseph's would remove a critical part of our community.

Caledon has made considerable progress in recent years towards becoming a more inclusive, connected, and vibrant community. The shared bus service, collaboration between the two primary schools, and integrated pre-school and after-school childcare provision have helped build genuine cross-community relationships. Removing St. Joseph's risks undoing this progress and altering the demographic balance of the village.

There are also wider economic impacts to consider. For local traders, with fewer families coming into the village, daily footfall will decline. The viability of both the play school and after school services are also at risk. Property values are likely to fall as the presence of a local Catholic primary school is a key factor for many families deciding whether to buy or remain in the area.

Over the longer term, the loss of St. Joseph's would contribute to a declining and ageing population, fewer local services, and reduced vitality in the village. This is not just a school closure — it is a decision that could fundamentally reshape the future of our community.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Department of Education not to proceed with the proposed closure of St. Joseph's Primary School. The social, educational, economic, and community costs are simply too high.

Yours faithfully,
