

Edwina Leonard

From: Correspondence Unit <eCorrCorrespondenceUnit@education.gov.ie>
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To: Edwina Leonard
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Ms. Edwina Leonard
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PLEASE QUOTE REF NUMBER ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE.

Our Ref: CU03804-2018

Dear Ms. Leonard,

I refer to your e-mail to the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr. Joe McHugh TD, regarding schools in the Tallaght area.

For school planning purposes, the Department divides the country into 314 geographic areas known as school planning areas which facilitates the orderly planning of school provision and accommodation needs. In identifying the requirement for additional school places, the Department uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify where the pressure for school places will arise.

The GIS uses data from the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, in addition to the Department's own databases. Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in an area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, the Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential developments in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development, including additional residential developments arising from the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

With this information, the Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools,
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,
- Provision of a new school or schools.

The Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new primary and post-primary school to be established in the Newcastle/Rathcoole school planning area as follows:

- a new 8 classroom primary school to be established in 2020 to serve the Newcastle/Rathcoole/Saggart school planning area; and
- a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2020 to serve the Tallaght and Newcastle/Rathcoole school planning areas as a regional solution.

This announcement follows nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by the Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

It is intended to deliver the two new schools as part of the Department's Design and Build programme in purpose-built accommodation on a shared site at Fortunestown Lane which is in the ownership of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB.

The Capital Programme provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. The Department has approved 3 temporary classrooms for Scoil Chronain NS Rathcoole to cater for immediate needs and these rooms are initially being provided for in Rathcoole Community Centre pending the arrival of 3 temporary classrooms at the school.

The Department is currently in the process of acquiring additional land owned by South Dublin County Council adjoining the site of this school and the additional land offers the potential to enhance current facilities and support future development. There is ongoing engagement with officials from South Dublin County Council on this matter.

The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard to the impact of the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. The Department will also continue to monitor areas where the accommodation of existing schools may need to be expanded in order to meet the needs of the local population.

I hope that this information is useful to you.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Newcombe
Private Secretary