

Southern Star

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Need for second classroom in Innishannon school

The accommodation needs of Scoil Eoin in Innishannon were raised in the Seanad by Fine Gael Senator Tim Lombard.

In the past six months he said the school had received planning permission from Cork County Council for two classrooms on the site, both of which would be 80 sq. m classrooms. First, the Department of Education and Skills granted approval for the building of one of these classrooms. Then, recently, the Department granted another approval for the school to build a special education teaching unit as well. This would be a 15 sq. m room.

“To me it does not make logical sense to provide for a situation whereby we will spend money on building this new unit,” he said. “We have no planning permission for it. We have planning permission for two classrooms. We were allowed to build one and now we have been given approval to build a smaller one.”

Senator Lombard said the school is looking for a logical solution that would allow it to build the two rooms for which it received planning permission. The money involved was small. “The school has been granted €34,000 for the small 15 sq. m room,” he said. “A further €100,000 would ensure the two classrooms would be built appropriately. This is basic common sense in many ways and it suits the practical dynamics of the site. This school will develop further because it has developed over the years.”

Replying on behalf of the Minister for Education & Skills, Minister Katherine Zappone said Scoil Eoin submitted an application to the Department of Education and Skills in December 2015, seeking two additional mainstream classes. Approval was granted for the provision of one mainstream classroom. This approval was to address the mainstream classroom accommodation deficit that would prevail with the appointment of an additional mainstream teacher from September 2016.

“The school subsequently submitted a further application to the Department in March 2017 for the provision of an additional mainstream classroom,” he said. “The application was assessed by the Department of Education and Skills and it was determined there was no deficit of mainstream classroom accommodation at the school. The Department determined, however, that in light of the special education teaching hours at the school there was a deficit of special education teaching accommodation. It is in that context that the Department of Education and Skills approved an additional special education teaching room for the school in addition to the mainstream classroom previously approved.”

Tribute paid to outgoing Taoiseach and Finance Minister

Tribute was paid in the Seanad to the outgoing Taoiseach Enda Kenny by the Cathaoirleach, Senator Denis O’Donovan.

“I found him extremely cordial and professional in my dealings with him as Cathaoirleach, Leas-Cathaoirleach and a Deputy,” he said. “When I was in the Dáil I always found him very courteous and a gentleman to deal with. Whatever about political differences, he deserves some time in the sunset with his wife, Fionnuala, and his family. I wish him the very best.”

Senator O’Donovan said the outgoing Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan, who is “a very affable, quiet-spoken gentleman from Limerick”, had, like the Taoiseach, served the nation for many years, with many personal and political ups and downs. “I would also like to wish him the very best in his retirement as a Minister,” he said. “I expect both the outgoing Taoiseach, and the outgoing Minister for Finance to spend less pressurised years in the other House.”