

Thank you to the Education Committee for this invitation.

My name is Marie Gordon, Principal of Ballinteer Educate Together National School in Dublin 14. The school was sanctioned and we opened in 2012 with one Junior Infant class; now in 2018 we have 11 classes, 275 pupils, a waiting list of over 250 children for 60 places in Junior Infants 2019, and we will grow to a minimum of 335 pupils and almost 20 teachers and 4 SNAs next year, and are located in our second set of temporary buildings.

Years 1 - 5

For the first five years, we occupied a section of St. Tiernan's Community School in Balally, Dublin 16. The classrooms and prefabs were half the size of a primary classroom; one class was in a converted locker room a quarter the size of a primary classroom.

Four learning support teachers worked with children with special educational needs in the lobby, an area about a quarter the size of one classroom, divided by bookcases and noticeboards.

The Principal's office was constructed by the caretaker out of recycled plasterboard in a corner of the lobby.

We had no sports hall, and PE and sports were dependent on the weather.

Most parents bought or rented houses and apartments in the area to be near the school and now have to travel much further to the current location.

Year 6:

Five years later, in August 2017, we were instructed by the DES to move everything to Notre Dame in Churchtown Dublin 14, a distance of about 3 Km but traffic means it can take a half hour or more of driving time; and many families, despite loving the school, have been compelled to move their children to other schools. This has a knock-on effect on numbers in the school and the staffing schedule.

The bus transport section of the DES will not provide transport for our displaced families even though we meet the required distances.

Approximately 10-15 families have had to pay for a private bus at a cost of €60 per child per month. Many parents spent last summer searching for after-schools in the Dublin 14 area and many other parents had to organise extra child care.

Impact of delays:

- Difficult educational environment for pupils and especially for children with special education needs.
- Challenging work conditions for staff and Principal
- Deflection of Principal's role from that of teaching and learning.
- Demoralising lack of communication and/or evidence of progress
- Extra financial costs for families
- Parents feel that their right to a school of their choosing is not being facilitated.

- Logistical challenges
- Health and safety issues
- Erosion of confidence in the DES
- Difficulty in embedding the school in the community due to moving and no long term definite plan.
- Challenges for the Board of Management in dealing with a) lack of communication, and b) organising constant change, refurbishment, logistics.
- Cost to the school of a second temporary refurbishment e.g. IT cabling, networks, IT technicians, new phone lines etc.
- The Board consequently needs to manage finances with great skill in order to deal with the extra costs associated with making the temporary accommodation fit for purpose.

Cause of Delays:

From the school's perspective, the cause of delays in constructing a school building appear to be:

- Lack of forward planning in allowing a suitable DES-owned site to become landlocked over 30 years;
- Lack of analysis of demographics and consequent future need for a school in the area;
- An apparent lack of 'joined-up' planning involving one person or one section of the DES focusing on the project from the sanctioning of the school to the completion of construction.

Thank you all very much. I am happy to answer any questions.