



**Oifig an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
Office of the Minister for Education and Skills

Ms Eileen Gorman

ETH-X 2<sup>nd</sup> Level Campaign

7<sup>th</sup> May 2019

**REF: ETH-X 2<sup>nd</sup> Level Campaign**

Dear Ms. O' Gorman,

Thank you for your recent correspondence in relation to our meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019. I would like to thank the Group for the meeting and for the information presented to me.

The purpose of our meeting was to discuss the Group's concerns in relation to access to the new post-primary school which is being established at Harold's Cross in 2020 in response to imminent demographic demand arising in the Dublin\_6\_Clonskeagh and Dublin\_6W school planning areas.

As you are already aware and as outlined at the meeting, for school planning purposes, my 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 a range of sources including 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 that area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential development 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).

Estimation of the oncoming demand also takes into account the enrolment pattern for the area (i.e. the extent to which there is a net influx or outflow of students resident in the area. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises at primary and post primary level to determine where additional school accommodation is needed.





Where data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent of 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 the school or schools,
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,
- Provision of a new school or schools.

In April 2018, a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school was announced to be established in 2020 in Harold's Cross to serve the Dublin6\_Clonskeagh and Dublin\_6W school planning area as a regional solution.

This announcement also included a new 600 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2021 to serve Dublin2\_Dublin 4 school planning area.

In addition, as you know, in 2018 a new 1,000 pupil co-educational, multi-denominational school under the patronage of Educate Together was established to serve the Dublin 8 school planning area, along with the Dublin2\_Dublin4 and Dublin6\_Clonskeagh school planning areas as a regional solution.

My Department's data shows that the existing schools in the Dublin 8 and Dublin 12 areas have sufficient current capacity to accommodate the demand in the area at present. While the national demographic exercise carried out in early 2018 showed that a demand in the new Dublin\_8 and Dolphin's Barn\_D12 school planning areas did not warrant a new school, the new schools listed above will provide 2,600 additional school places in South Dublin City, relieving overall pressure being experienced across a number of school planning areas and will provide more choice for parents.

As you will appreciate, it is not always possible to locate a new school in the centre of the school planning area(s) for which it has been identified, particularly in the Dublin South City area where land availability is known to be very limited. While the identified location for the new post-primary school in Harold's Cross is proximate to the Dublin 8 and Dublin 12 school planning areas, all new schools established since 2011 to meet demographic demand are required to prioritise pupil applications from within the designated school planning area(s) which school was established to serve. To do otherwise would risk the identified demographic demand in the school planning areas to be served not being met and would not be logical, particularly having regard to the need to make the best use of available resources and to get best value for taxpayer's money.

Notwithstanding the above, this does not preclude schools from enrolling pupils from outside of the designated school planning area/s where they have sufficient places. As outlined to you at our meeting, the Department's priority is ensuring that all pupils have access to a school place which unfortunately may not always result in a school place that is their first choice. However, in many instances the Department builds schools which have capacity to accommodate more places than have been identified as being immediately required. This is the case for the new post-primary school to be located in Harold's Cross where some additional capacity has been factored into planning for the new school. It is expected that this additional capacity will absorb some demand from outside of the Dublin 6 school planning areas.

If there are more applicants than places available, once the applications from within the designated school planning area(s) have been addressed, the Board of Management can prioritise enrolment of children on the basis of other criteria. For example, it would be open to the school to give priority to



applicants who have attended a particular primary school (known as a feeder school). The criteria to be applied by schools in such circumstances are a matter for the schools themselves. The selection process and enrolment policy must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. When the patron for the school in Harold's Cross is decided, my Department can provide any clarifications required by the patron in this regard.

While ETB schools are multi-denominational in nature, I understand that City of Dublin ETB and Educate Together have started discussions in relation to a possible partnership with a view to Educate Together involvement in existing school provision at second level in the Dublin 7 and 12 areas. I am supportive of this initiative which has the potential to add to and enhance the availability of additional choice in the area and my Department is engaging with the bodies concerned in this regard. This represents an opportunity to significantly increase diversity of provision in existing schools in areas where a new school is not required.

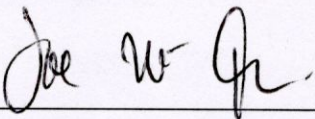
In summary, while the existing schools in the Dublin 8 and Dublin 12 areas have sufficient capacity to accommodate demand in the area at present, the newly-established school and those due to come on-stream in the next number of years will provide further choice to parents and will also have the effect of reducing pressure on existing schools. In addition, the proposed partnership approach between City of Dublin ETB and Educate Together in Dublin 12 has the potential to increase diversity of provision in existing schools in the area.

In the light of all of the above my Department considers that it is not appropriate to deviate from the existing policies in relation to this school.

The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



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Mr Joe Mc Hugh, T.D.

Minister for Education and Skills