

Dear Deputy,

I am writing to you as a parent / carer / guardian (*delete as appropriate*) of a student in Harold's Cross Educate Together Secondary School and as a constituent of Dublin Bay South (*if applicable*).

Harold's Cross Educate Together Secondary School is currently in temporary modular build accommodation on our permanent site in Harold's Cross and I am seeking your support for the expedited construction of our permanent school building. We currently have no timeline as to when the construction of the school building will go to tender or when construction will actually begin.

Planning permission for our school building was approved by An Bord Pleanála on 1st April 2022 and I am asking that you would, through all means at your disposal, press the Government and Department of Education to ensure that the tender process proceeds and construction begins as a matter of urgency.

Our school opened in August 2020 under the patronage of Educate Together following a vote by local families who wanted an equality based, child-centred school in their community. The school started with 38 pupils and has continued to grow rapidly in a short space of time. The school now has 181 students from First Year to Third Year, along with one autism class. There is huge demand for places in our school but due to a lack of accommodation, is not able to provide a school place for all of the families who live locally in our area. For 72 First Year places for September 2023, the school received 362 applications.

We are a vibrant, inclusive and thriving school community but the uncertainty around our school building is extremely unfair and concerning.

I read with dismay, recent media coverage regarding the Department of Education's decision to put the construction of our school building on hold due to budgetary constraints. Pausing this tender process is a false economy given the huge amount of money that has been and will continue to be wasted on temporary modular build accommodation on a site that is rapidly running out of classroom and yard space.

It is not acceptable that our school would be allowed to languish in temporary accommodation for a prolonged period of time, on a site and with facilities that are not fit for purpose. Our children deserve the same educational facilities and opportunities as their peers in other schools. Facilities such as a sports hall, canteen, specialist classrooms and appropriate outdoor space and so on are essential for a holistic education. Simply to put a modular roof over their heads is an unacceptably low bar.

No child's educational experience should be limited by the inadequate planning and arbitrary budgetary decisions by the Government and Department of Education which our school community currently suffers. This is not a situation any elected public representative should stand over.

I am asking that you would support our school community at this time by insisting that the Government and Department of Education prioritise the urgent construction of our school building. We need this for our school to continue to develop to serve the local community, and most importantly, in order for the students to thrive.

Yours faithfully,