

MICHAEL McNAMARA TD

Labour

WORKING FOR CLARE



BRIGHT NEW FUTURE FOR ENNISTYMON STUDENTS

After years of campaigning and hard work it was with some satisfaction that I learnt that Ennistymon is to receive a new post primary school building. My colleague, the Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan, has this week announced that Ennistymon is to be included in the Schools Building Programme.

The long journey to this day has not been an easy one, with local campaigners meeting years of disappointment along the way. Talks of a new amalgamated school began as far back as 1997. It is indeed a testament to the dedication of the school communities that a new building has finally been secured.

Having worked with the school during the past four and a half years, I know firsthand the work involved. I was happy to play my part by continuously lobbying for this essential building. In 2014 I asked then former Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn to meet with the Amalgamation Group, followed by another meeting with the current Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan earlier this year.

In the past year alone a site large enough to facilitate the building was secured. The Department of Education had previously acquired lands in the Ennistymon area but additional ground was required. The Congregation of The Sisters of Mercy (Western Province) is to transfer land to the Department, and this land together with the land already in the ownership of the Department will be sufficient to meet the overall site requirements.

Progress has also been made on the building itself. The Department is finalising the project brief, with the aim of moving ahead with the appointment of a Design Team to progress the architectural planning phase.

The future of a new Secondary School for Ennistymon was further secured when the Minister announced on Tuesday November 17, 2015, that it is one of the buildings to be constructed under the new Schools Building Programme.

NEW VISION, NEW BUILDING

The Department of Education is drawing up a very precise brief for the Design Team charged with creating a state of the art school building for Ennistymon. Included in this vision for Ennistymon is a school building of 26 general class rooms, the majority of which will be designed to hold up to 30 students.

Five specialised classrooms are also envisaged including a music room, multimedia room, and two rooms for textiles, design and technical graphic rooms, as well as four science laboratories. Two arts and crafts rooms and a home economics room, as well as a room for construction studies, one for engineering and a technology studies room will all help to broaden the educational opportunities and subjects available at the school.

A library, preparation rooms, offices, staff rooms, storage and general purpose rooms are all being planned for. Modern Physical Education facilities are also to be built, including a PE Hall and Fitness Suite. Special Educational Needs are to be met in a proposed specialised double class unit which would include a multi-sensory room, para-educational room and a practical activity room, as well as specialised classrooms. Such a school will provide a suitable and comfortable place of education for second level students in Ennistymon for generations to come.



STEINER SCHOOL

Just as every child and family differ, so too do their educational needs and indeed preferences. I was therefore delighted that the Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan granted Permanent Recognition to Mol an Óige, Ennistymon earlier this year.

Now that the school's "temporary" recognition has been replaced with "permanent" status, Mol an Óige can face the future with great confidence. Permanent recognition gives security to teachers, parents and children. I remain committed to providing diversity in education. The decision in relation to Mol an Óige in Ennistymon is a positive step in providing that diversity in North Clare.



FREE GP CARE

As many as 3,900 Clare children under the age of six are in receipt of free GP care, with 96 per cent of local doctors signing up for the scheme.

As part of Budget 2016, Free GP care is to be extended to children under the age of 12. This move must be welcomed, especially by young families who worry about not being able to afford a visit to the doctor when their child falls ill.

Free care is also being provided to all those over 70 years of age. It has been a longstanding objective of the Labour Party's to establish free GP care to all, and I believe these moves to ensure free care to the youngest and oldest in our society is a move in the right direction – a foundation we can continue to build on.

The five years since the last election have been painful for almost all in our society. However the pain has not been without purpose and as a people we are beginning to rebuild our country and hope is being restored. As people return to work and unemployment falls, the Government is finally able to invest again in our future.

I believe that investment in education is essential to the future of our State. Therefore, I was delighted that after years of hard work and disappointment, a new secondary school building has finally been sanctioned for Ennistymon by my colleague, the Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan. This new building will allow for the amalgamation of the area's three post primary schools – Scoil Mhuire, Scoil Mhainchin and Ennistymon CBS.

Clare is currently experiencing an increase in employment and unemployment is down by almost 30 per cent since 2011.

Education is the bedrock of any community and the construction of a new school is an important investment in the future of Ennistymon and its community. I am grateful for the support I received from the people of Ennistymon at the last election and during my time as a backbench TD. I have done my best to improve the quality of life for the people of Clare, and will continue to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Michael McNamara in black ink.



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