



Dear Parents,

As you know we received sanction in April for an 4th mainstream class teacher in our school. Shortly after that the Board of Management set about applying for funding for an extra classroom as there is no suitable room in the school at present. The Board also went ahead and sought planning permission for a new permanent classroom and a temporary (prefab) classroom which would be needed while the permanent classroom is being built. This planning permission was granted during the summer.

However, correspondence was received on 15th August which stated that the Department would not sanction temporary accommodation for our school and that the school "will have to utilise the accommodation they presently have." Our application for a permanent extension to the school has not been decided on yet.

We looked at all options to accommodate the extra classes and the only option that would work would be to move into the GP Room.

The GP Room is used by the school during the day for activities such as PE, Drama, Music, concerts etc. Visiting agencies such as OT therapists, HSE, etc. can also use the room without disturbing the other classes. We have a substantial number of children with special needs and these children use the hall for movement/sensory breaks on a daily basis. The hall is also used on wet days so that children are not in classrooms all day without a break on these days.

The GP Room is used by different groups each evening for afterschool activities for children. We have activities such as gymnastics, yoga, Irish dancing, GAA coaching. Not only are these activities of benefit to the children but they are also a source of revenue for the school

If we have to use the GP Room as a classroom, then some or all of the above activities have to cease. We are all losers in that scenario but the real victims are the children. We don't want to let this happen.

In March 2010 we were granted funding (under the devolved scheme) to build a new 3 classroom school on a greenfield site. **The community provided the site free of charge.** The plans that we had submitted to the department included a GP Room. The department instructed us to cut down the floor area of the school. This would mean cutting down the floor area of each room substantially (which wasn't really an option) or cutting out the GP Room altogether. The parents and community of Mayo Abbey then decided that we would go ahead and build the GP Room if at all possible. A lot of people gave a lot of time and effort fundraising for this room and we succeeded in getting it build and furnished. **In effect the building of this room was funded by the parents and community, not the Department of Education.**

We are still fighting our case with the Department of Education and have been in contact with Minister Michael Ring, Lisa Chambers and other local politicians. I would urge all of you to do the same. The main points to stress are:

- Our children are being victimised and their education is being compromised by having to use the GP Room as a classroom.
- The Parents and Community of Mayo Abbey funded the building of the GP Room, not the Department of Education.
- There is no other suitable room in the school to accommodate 3rd/4th classes, their teacher and an SNA.
- We have planning permission (with associated fire and disability certs) granted and are ready to install a portacabin immediately should we get sanction from the Department of Education.

Hopefully, with everybody's help, this will be a short-term situation and we will have our GP Room back in use as a GP Room as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely,
Miriam Quinn, Principal

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