

Disadvantaged primary and secondary school children to get free school meals

– Mary Coughlan TD Minister for Social and Family Affairs

Disadvantaged primary and secondary schools will be prioritised in a major expansion of the school meals scheme, Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs announced today.

Under a major expansion of the scheme school children may get airline style hot meals that will be prepared at a central location and microwaved on site, meals cooked on site or cold high nutrition meals.

”Targeting disadvantage will be the priority, and a series of new school meal projects will be tailored to meet the needs and facilities of individual schools,” said Minister Coughlan today.

The Minister made the announcement after visiting St Francis senior school, Priorswood, Dublin where a school meals project provides meals to 1,545 children every day.

The new school meal programmes will commence in the new school year. Minister Coughlan will boost funding of the scheme by €2million this year –bringing total funding to over €4million. This follows the first review of the scheme since its inception ninety years ago.

Up to now approximately 60,000 primary children in 400 schools every day benefit from the free school meals scheme.



”The free school meals scheme is about to undergo a major expansion. It will be extended to secondary schools for the first time, and I will be actively targeting disadvantage and hope to further extend the scheme, “ said Minister Coughlan.

”I will be closely looking at the effectiveness of delivery of the new school meals scheme, the use of the EU school milk scheme, nutritional goals and cost.

”Our own review of the scheme and international studies all point to the direct benefit to children’ attendance at school, attentiveness, enthusiasm for school and well being,” said Minister Coughlan.

The Dublin 17 Early School Leavers Initiative (Dublin 17ESLI) was established by the Northside Partnership in order to combat the high number of pupils in the area who were leaving school early. It is operated for St Francis Junior and Senior schools Priorswood, St Joseph’s National school, Bonnybrook and Our Lady Immaculate senior and junior schools in Darndale and participants include the St Vincent de Paul, FÁS local schools, parents and the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

The Dublin 17 ESLI group state that the provision of breakfast and



lunch has improved attendance and punctuality. The social skills of children, concentration levels and the capacity to learn have been improved for many children who arrive in school without breakfast or food for lunchtime.

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