



Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Coughlan TD plans to expand school meals scheme

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Coughlan TD said that she was finalising a plan to expand and target the school meals programme which provides breakfasts to 60,000 children every day.

”This programme provides breakfasts for 60,000 children in approximately 400 schools in mainly urban areas, “ said the Minister.

Today she visited St Louis’ infant school in Rathmines Dublin 6 to see the scheme in operation. Children at the school receive a carton of milk, and a sandwich every day and a bun once a week. The scheme is co funded by the local authority and the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

”I was very impressed with St Louis’ school and the operation of the scheme there.

“I have set in train a national review of the scheme my Department funds with a budget of over €1 million a year.

“I would like to see this scheme expanded and targeted at schools where there is disadvantage – this scheme was first established in response to the Great Lock out 90 years ago when many of the areas where there is disadvantage were not even built.

”Studies and expert opinion have shown that there is a link between nutrition and learning ability –and quite simply children who go to school without a breakfast or without an adequate breakfast will find their education suffers and as they lag behind in school the risk they will dropout from school in their teenage years increases.

“This scheme has great potential to help youngsters and I hope to be in a position to shortly announce a school meals initiative, “ said Minister Coughlan.



Ends
29th January, 2003