

Rejected Children of Mayo

We are writing regarding the loss of DEIS status at Coláiste Pobail Acla. The sequence of events that led to this injustice and have become a catastrophe from the students' point of view are as follows:

2010: There were two post primary schools in Achill Island - Mc Hale College (VEC - 450 students) and Scoil Damhnait (28 students). McHale college had DEIS status – Scoil Damhnait did not.

2011: Due to dwindling numbers, Scoil Damhnait was forced to close and its 28 students were accommodated in McHale College which was then renamed Coláiste Pobail Acla and given a new Roll Number.

This is what actually happened:

Parents were assured by VEC that the amalgamation was a good move for the school and the future of post primary education in the area. The only cost appeared to be the new school uniform. It was specifically confirmed that the DEIS status would not be affected.

2014 (May) - Informed by HEAR office that Coláiste Pobail Acla was no longer a DEIS school - it was a new school and no new schools had been added to the DEIS list since its formation in 2005. HEAR had got this information from Department of Education list of DEIS schools.

2014 (May) - VEC management insisted that Coláiste Phobail Acla was a DEIS school.

2014 (July) - Department of Education confirmed that Coláiste Pobail Acla was not a DEIS school but that certain DEIS benefits were awarded to the school in respect of pupils that had attended McHale College - those pupils were currently in 5th year and all DEIS benefits would cease on their graduation.

We are now in a position with nine DEIS National schools feeding into a non-DEIS secondary school in one of the most geographically and economically disadvantaged areas in the country.

The negotiations that led to the formation of Coláiste Pobail Acla may have been complex as we have been told, and had to deal with a lot of issues. What happened in effect was that a large DEIS school was “absorbed” by a tiny non-DEIS school, instead of the other way around. In the process, a great injustice has been done to the students who are attending the school and all future students of the school. We believe that both the Department of Education and the VEC had and have a duty of care to their students and should have not agreed on any amalgamation that was contrary to the students' interests whilst informing the parents that nothing regarding the DEIS status would change.

The accommodation of 28 students from a school that was forced to close due to a dwindling population, a crippling recession, and the re-emergence of mass emigration should have been supported by the VEC and the Department of Education, without being seen as an opportunity to further deprive all of the students of the area. The parents of all these students are bitterly disappointed by this. The Leaving Certificate students of 2014/2015 have already suffered, and it looks like the students of 2016 will suffer further injustice.

DEIS status has been removed from a school serving one of the country's most disadvantaged areas. Its immediate Full reinstatement is the only way justice can be served.

Despite numerous letters being sent to the relevant bodies and meetings with local politicians who confirmed that there had been a mistake and if we kept quiet and gave them time to sort the mistake out, the full DEIS status would be retained

We have now been informed that full DEIS status will not be reinstated.

As parents, our interests are solely the welfare of our children and we are aggrieved that their educational futures have been affected by persons more interested in new school names and roll numbers.

*The Children of Achill Island, Currane, Tonragee, Mulranny and Ballycroy need your help -
Please do not let them down.*

We are just trying to give them a chance.

We look forward to your reply

Regards

Seamus Butler & Greg Hannigan

Joint Chair of the Parents' Council Association, Coláiste Pobail Acla,

Achill Island

County Mayo

The following is a list of supports for DEIS Post Primary schools - these are now denied to Coláiste Pobail Acla as a result of the amalgamation.

Staffing schedule of 18.25:1 compared to the existing standard 19:1 which applied in non-fee charging schools.

[Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts for 2014/2015 in Voluntary Secondary Schools](#)

[Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts for 2014/2015 in Community and Comprehensive Schools](#)

[Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts for 2014/2015 in ETBs](#)

DEIS grant paid based on level of disadvantage and enrolment - [DEIS Funding Guidelines](#)

Access to [Home School Community Liaison services](#)

Access to [Schools Meals Programme](#)

Access to range of supports under [School Completion Programme](#)

Access to Junior Certificate Schools Programme

Access to Leaving Certificate Applied Programme

Access to planning supports

Access to a range of professional development supports

Additional funding under [School Books Grant Scheme](#) (see also [Textbook Rental Schemes in Schools](#))