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School's 20-year wait for classroom

Mohill school awaits funding amid growing concerns over its ageing prefab

Stella Gordon

CALLS have been made for the Department of Education to recognise the urgency of the situation facing a Leitrim primary school, as its structure continues to deteriorate and another winter approaches.

Hunt National School, a small school in Mohill, has been using a prefab as a classroom for more than 20 years.

Over the past few years, the structure has become increasingly dilapidated, unsightly and run-down, with its overall condition now very poor. Numerous repairs have been carried out over the years, but according to Acting Principal Lauren Stoddart, the situation has reached a point where further repairs are no longer viable and the prefab is no longer fit for purpose.

Representations were recently made at a meeting of Carrick-on-Shannon Municipal District, calling on the Department to provide the funding required to allow work on the school to proceed.

Leitrim businesses clinch national award nominations

● Jinny's Bakery and McHugh's Bar lead the county's representation, with multiple nominations recognising their family businesses

The awards ceremony will take place on Thursday, November 5, at The Johnstown Estate, Enfield, Co. Meath.

Jinny's Bakery and Tearooms is run by Sinead and Pascal Gillard. The bakery supplies major retailers such as Centra and SuperValu.

The business employs up to 20 people, both full and part-time. Pascal also runs McGuire's Red Door Cottages, beside the tearooms.

McHugh's Bar, on Bridge Street, Carrick-on-Shannon, is a well-known party and live music venue.

Owned and operated by husband and wife team Enda and Caroline McHugh, the popular venue has achieved the distinction of being shortlisted as a national finalist across three major categories.

For Caroline and Enda, parents to Megan, Michael, Dylan and two-year-old Dara, the triple nomination is a special milestone.

Their journey began while they were living and working in Australia for a decade, where they purchased McHugh's Bar, before returning home to Ireland to take the helm themselves.

"Starting off in this business unexpectedly with two children under two took an immense amount of effort, and we simply couldn't have done it without the love and support of our family," Caroline stated.

"To now be standing as finalists in three national categories, with four children alongside us, means a lot to us.

"It is a true testament to the hard work of our incredible team and the continuous support of our wonderful customers and local community here in Carrick-on-Shannon," Caroline added.

The recognition in the Innovative Family Business of the Year category reflects McHugh's Bar's ongoing development. Over the past year, the venue has picked up a number of top honours.

These include All-Ireland People's Choice Bar of the Year, National Winner for Best Match Day Bar at the Irish Pub Awards, and Best Music Bar in Connacht.

Beyond traditional hospitality, the family has continually reinvested in guest experiences.

These include creating their own signature McHugh's Lager and McHugh's Irish Whiskey, introducing The Outback live music stage, The Grandstand group area, and a private 20-seat Hummer limousine service.

Looking ahead, the McHugh

family is continuing to invest in the future of Bridge Street and the wider Carrick-on-Shannon hospitality scene.

Expansion plans are currently underway across neighbouring properties to bring a new restaurant and playground, a café, and boutique accommodation offerings to the town.

"We are thrilled to be heading to the finals on November 5 alongside Pascal and Sinead from Jinny's Bakery to fly the flag for Leitrim," Enda McHugh commented.

Jinny's Bakery and Tearooms will also have a busy month in November. The Drumshanbo-based business has been nominated for the Good Food Ireland 20th Anniversary Awards.

It has received nominations in the Bakery and Chocolate Producer of the Year and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands categories.

Another Leitrim restaurant, The Selkie, in Tullaghan, has also been nominated in the latter category, while Kilronan Castle has also received a nomination for this award.

Speaking to the Observer, Pascal Gillard, who runs the business along with his wife Sinead (whose nickname is Jinny), said there are great networking opportunities for his company at present.

"I was in France recently at an International Food Fair. We were the only Leitrim company there. We were there alongside the Local Development Office," he explained.

"Every country in the world was represented there. My wife Sinead was in Spain recently with Good Food Ireland."

Their business was also featured on a billboard campaign run by FBD Insurance entitled "Fuel your dreams."

"Food isn't just business, there is also tourism, such as food-related holidays," he stated.

The Family Business Awards recognise small family businesses such as Pascal and Sinead's.

"When we started, we only had a part-time job or two. Now, we have 16 or 17 jobs," Pascal explained.



Sinead and Pascal Gillard of Jinny's Bakery and Tearooms, whose family business continues to go from strength to strength with nominations at both the Family Business Awards and Good Food Ireland Awards.



Enda and Caroline McHugh of McHugh's Bar, Carrick-on-Shannon, pictured with their children Megan, Michael, Dylan and Dara, as their family business celebrates three nominations at the 2026 Family Business Awards.