

NEWS

Back to school time for Mary, Milltown's first ever Minister

• Crowds gather to welcome Jobs Minister to her former school

By Tom Gilmore

IT was school on Sunday for Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Mary Mitchell O'Connor at the national school she attended as a child in Belmont, Milltown.

Mary's mother Kathleen, a former principal, was there when the recently appointed Minister visited her alma mater.

Large crowds of pupils past and present, parents, teachers, other staff, neighbours and other well wishers were present for what was a triumphant homecoming for Mary, whose parents are Kathleen and Paddy from nearby Emeracly.

Earlier Minister Mary had attended Mass in Milltown where she also met many others from the wider community who were there to

“The rough and tumble in the school yard at Belmont prepared Mary for life in politics

congratulate here on being selected as a Government Minister.

She spoke fondly of her school days in Belmont and shared many memories with her classmates. She also had a laugh looking at her absenteeism in the roll book before making a speech and having her picture with the pupils, parents, staff and others who attending the gathering.

Principal Eleanor Sheridan



ON the roll: Mary Mitchell O'Connor is shown her name in the school roll book by Principal Eleanor Sheridan and pupils from the school. Also pictured is Mary's son Stephen.

said it was a very historic day for the school and she also said it was an inspirational event for everyone.

“There was a really warm friendly atmosphere with all shades of political opinion and none present and the

new Minister said that the rough and tumble playing football in the school yard at Belmont and walking home in the evenings prepared her for the rough and tumble of politics,” says the principal.

“The new Minister was also

very positive in her comments on small schools and she also emphasised that she is a ‘West of Ireland girl’ and she will never forget that,” added Eleanor.

She was the replacement principal in the school when

Minister O'Connor's mother retired in 1994.

On Sunday presentations of bouquets of flowers were made to the both the Minister and her mother Kathleen by present pupils at the school.



MINISTER for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Mary Mitchell O'Connor with her family at a homecoming celebration in her honour at Belmont National School, where she attended as a pupil: Stephen Mitchell, Anthony O'Connor, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, Paddy and Kathleen O'Connor and Cathriona O'Connor.

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MINISTER Mary Mitchell O'Connor with her son Stephen and retired teacher Mary Sheridan, who taught her at Belmont National School.