



## A healthy learning environment:

Why it's one of my top priorities as an educator

### EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with school principal, Clíodhna O'Brien of St. Anne's Loreto Primary School in Navan.

At SMC Group, we specialise in floor cleaning and restoration and, as a result, we frequently collaborate with schools and educational institutions. While many educators prioritise workplace health and hygiene, not all do. One notable exception is Clíodhna O'Brien, Principal at St. Anne's Loreto Primary School. We recently cleaned, restored and hermetically sealed her floors and she was kind enough to agree to an interview with our Managing Director, Mark Conlon, to discuss the importance of a healthy, clean environment.

**MARK:** Principal O'Brien, it's a pleasure to have you here. Reflecting on our partnership since you first sought our floor restoration services, you've always shared our zeal for cleanliness in the workplace. Can you share why this is such an important topic for you?

**CLÍODHNA:** Thank you, Mark. The opportunity to discuss this is something I relish. With my extensive experience in education, my role goes beyond teaching. It's about making sure my school is a healthy, and hazard-free environment. This commitment is essential to my philosophy as an educator.

**MARK:** One thing I've noticed is that student well-being is a more prominent focus nowadays. What are your thoughts on its growing importance?

**CLÍODHNA:** Mark, the well-being of our students is paramount. Full stop. A healthy learning environment directly impacts the student's physical and emotional health.

The health and happiness of my students are non-negotiable for me and for educators everywhere. A clean environment directly translates to a more nurturing and productive atmosphere for education!

**MARK:** Speaking about productivity, can cleanliness relate to academic success?

**CLÍODHNA:** The correlation can be very significant. A well-maintained environment promotes a conducive atmosphere

for learning, enhancing focus and motivation. It prepares students to engage more deeply with their studies and achieve their goals.

When students feel comfortable, they are better prepared to engage with their studies and reach their full potential!

**MARK:** Speaking about engagement, can this affect attendance at all?

**CLÍODHNA:** Yes, of course, it can impact a student's presence at school. Students are more eager to come to school when they know they're entering a clean space! Maintaining a hazard-free and welcoming environment can reduce the risk of absenteeism.

**MARK:** In light of recent health crises, how has the approach to cleanliness changed?

**CLÍODHNA:** It's become more crucial than ever. The recent global health crisis has reminded us of the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. We contribute to disease prevention within our school community by diligently upholding health and sanitation standards. This not only protects our students and staff but also their families.

**MARK:** We've spoken about how cleanliness affects the students, but what about the teachers and staff?

**CLÍODHNA:** It goes without saying, to be honest. A happy



Pictured: Gavin McDermot of SMC Group deep cleaning & hermetically sealing the floors at St. Anne's Loreto Primary School in Navan.

faculty translates to a more nurturing and productive learning environment. When they work in a clean and organised space, morale and job satisfaction improve, which has a knock-on effect, and positively impacts the quality of education they provide.

**MARK:** We've spoken about people but what about the property itself?

**CLÍODHNA:** Regular maintenance and care of our facilities are essential for preserving the integrity and longevity of our buildings. Neglecting this aspect could lead to expensive repairs and renovations down the line, diverting resources away from education while also being hypocritical of environmental awareness through needless landfills.

**MARK:** You touched on environmental awareness there, could you elaborate further on this?

**CLÍODHNA:** I'm a big believer in sustainability and the old saying 'Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.' is a philosophy I've always tried to live by.

When we approached SMC Group, the most important thing for us was restoring our floor because we didn't want to throw it away. We wanted to keep it going as long as we could. It meant no new manufacturing, no landfill & heavy machinery etc. It was a win-win.

**MARK:** To wrap up, and this could be hard to do, could you summarize the overarching importance of cleanliness in your school?

**CLÍODHNA:** Absolutely. It's like this, a healthy learning environment isn't just a matter of aesthetics; it's a core requirement for the well-being and success of our students. As an educator, I'm committed to creating a space where students can thrive academically and personally. Our dedication to maintaining cleanliness, safety, and hazard-free facilities is not just a duty; it's an essential part of our mission to empower our students to become confident, capable, and compassionate individuals.

#### ABOUT FLOOR RESTORATION

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