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School, teacher ordered to pay €291,000 compensation to injured former pupil



Bambi Playschool and teacher Lorenza Dimech were today ordered to pay a total of €291,000 in compensation to a child who had fallen down a flight of stairs after a classroom was left unattended. The child suffered 60 per cent permanent disability.

The incident happened on January 14, 1998 when the boy, who was five years old at the time, left the class room because he needed to go to the toilet. He was not meant to leave the class and the teacher had told him not to.

However the teacher then went downstairs to fetch some papers. The boy went out to the stairwell and stood up on a chair to see if the teacher was coming back. He fell and ended up unconscious at the bottom of the stairs.

He suffered head injuries resulting in loss of control over the left side of his body and reduced vision, among other consequences.

The school was ordered to pay three quarters of the compensation while the teacher will have to pay the remainder.

The court said the school had failed in its primary duty to prevent injury to the children in its care. This failure related to the unsafe structure of the school and the absence of support staff who were required to ensure that the children were not left on their own.

The teacher was also to blame because she had left the children on their own in order to pick up some papers from a downstairs office. This was not an emergency which justified leaving the children alone.

In 2002 the teacher was also fined €920 after being convicted of involuntarily harming the boy.