



NEWS



DIVERSITY WEEK

In early March the Grammar School dedicated a week to celebrate the great diversity within our school. The week began with a whole-school assembly where we welcomed special guest Mabel Chah, a native of Cameroon, who has lived in Sligo for the last number of years. Mabel told the students about her experience as a refugee and her involvement in Sligo Global Kitchen. The week continued with activities of all kinds. International diversity quizzes were held for all classes with prizes for the winners, and lunchtimes saw students from all years get involved in Karaoke, a Talent Show, a Lunchtime Debate and a Lunchtime Concert. During the course of the week the Geography department had students put together a world map showing the many countries they and their families come from. The highlight of the week came on Friday with an International Morning. Students from different cultural backgrounds presented national customs, dress, music, dance and food. The food was particularly popular! The festive atmosphere was helped by the fact that the day was a Non-Uniform Charity Day as well, with the senior LCVP students collecting funds for the North West Hospice and Pieta House. There was a positive and joyful atmosphere around the school for the week and it really helped the students appreciate the many and diverse traditions and cultures within the school.

ACTIONAID FINALISTS

We were delighted when two of our fifth year students, Tara McLaughlin and Genevieve Cox, were shortlisted as finalists in the National ActionAid Speechwriting Competition.

ActionAid is a global federation which seeks a just world, free from poverty and oppression. ActionAid Ireland is particularly committed to improving the lives of women and their children across the developing world and it was this subject that formed the basis of the speeches submitted by the SGS girls. The final of the competition was to be held in March, but due to the Lockdown it has been postponed until June. The girls will have to pre-record their speeches and attend a Zoom Conference Competition Final in lieu of a live one! Interesting! Well done to the girls and we wish them luck in the on-line Finals.



The Girls have been involved in the debating club – SGS DebSoc – in the past, and are both past contestants in the Soroptomists Public Speaking Competition and the Europe Direct Soapbox Public Speaking Competition. Indeed, Genevieve was a National Finalist in the Soapbox competition. The SGS DebSoc continues to bring on young speakers and debaters as it meets every week in the Khansama. Public Lunchtime Debates are held in the school a few times each term. The last one before Lockdown was held during Diversity week when the motion for debate was "This House Believes that quotas are the only solution to gender equality and diversity in the workplace". The Opposition won!

Students from all years are welcome to come along to the SGS DebSoc meetings.



NEWS



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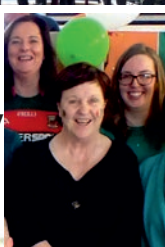


NEWS



GOODBYE MRS O'DONNELL

The week was the final Seachtain Na Gaeilge for Mrs O'Donnell, who has been the driving force behind the event for many years. This dedicated and much-loved teacher is heading into retirement this Summer and will be sorely missed by all. A member of SGS staff for over 30 years, Mrs O'Donnell taught Business Studies and Gaeilge to our students. She always gave generously of her time to both students and fellow teachers. Mrs O'Donnell was a cheerful presence around the school and will be missed by us all. We hope she has a great retirement and enjoys every minute of it!



CHRISTIAN UNION

The Christian Union meets in the Cabin once every week during lunch. Students can have a chat and catch up over tea and biscuits. The CU has been running quietly in SGS for many years and what has kept it going is the students' wish to have some time with God in their school day. Participants can take part in voluntary activities such as prayer and songs. CU is open to people from all backgrounds and beliefs, from 1st to 6th year. Discover and discuss the Christian perspective on various topics, listen to guest speakers and hear what they think about the chosen topic for that week. When school opens again, keep an eye out for any CU posters or announcements!

SEACHTAIN NA GAEILGE

In the week before we were sent home for the rest of the term, Sligo Grammar School held its annual Seachtain Na Gaeilge. This is the week when we celebrate our Irishness. Organised by Mrs Colette O'Donnell and a team of TY students, the week was full of activities and events "as gaeilge". Lunchtimes were the hub of activity with Irish language biongo, Toraíochtaí Taisce agus an "Puc Fada", probably the most popular of all the activities! Another lunchtime highlight was a trad. music session featuring students and teachers, while the ever-popular Dáta Dall was held on Tuesday evening. Teachers incorporated Irish cultural pursuits into their classes such as in PE where students got a chance to play Gaelic football and hurling. Most importantly, prizes of Easter eggs were awarded to students in all competitions! The week ended with a non-uniform Lá Glas for charity. Everyone, including the teachers, wore something green in honour of St. Patrick, and donated €1 to charity. The week was a great success and a good memory as we headed into Lockdown.

CHRISTIAN UNITY WEEK

In January a special assembly was held to mark Christian Unity



Week. The Grammar School was delighted to welcome students and staff from our neighbouring school, Summerhill College who took part in the Service, with School Principal Mr. Paul Keogh, addressing the students. His inspiring speech highlighted the importance of working together. The Assembly was complemented by music from the SGS choir and musicians. The Sixth Year students also got the benefit of an afternoon of contemplation as they attended a retreat in Calry Church. In this pressure-filled year it is good to take some time out to think about things other than studies!

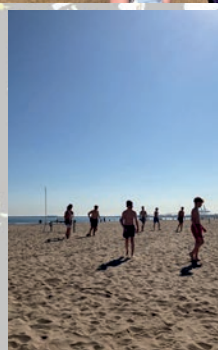




NEWS U15 RUGBY TRIP



In mid-February twenty-six U15 rugby players from SGS returned from a hugely successful team trip to Valencia, Spain. This was a team-building trip for the U15s who will be forming the backbone of next year's Junior Cup Team. The week was an eventful one for the boys. As well as playing rugby they got to experience something of the culture of Valencia, visiting the Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias where they saw an exhibition about the brain and how it works and performed tests of strength, among other things. The boys toured around the city of Valencia, absorbing the atmosphere as well as the sun! A visit to the beach was a highlight for the fearless Irish, who were featured on the evening news as they enjoyed the cold waters of the Mediterranean in Spring! It may have been too cold for the Spanish but for the Sligo boys it was "just right!" There was also rugby, of course. The team trained on the local community pitch and played against two teams from Valencia – Valencia RFC and CAU Valencia, the Spanish champions. SGS won 3 tries to 1 against Valencia RFC and lost 3 tries to nil against CAU Valencia. Second Year Spanish language students also got the unique opportunity to do their CBA with a local school, practicing their communication skills en español, and found the experience very rewarding and successful. The week was rounded off on Saturday morning when the boys were treated to an open-air feast of paella by the two rugby clubs. The whole trip was a great success and a memorable one for the boys. Thanks so much to Ms Martin, Diarmuid O'Dowd-Hill and Mr Staunton for giving up their time for the U15s.



AWARD NOMINATIONS

In the midst of the Lockdown, the school received great news on the School musical front. The school show "Grease" was nominated for no less than four awards in the new schools drama competition, the "Stagewise National Awards". In total there were 72 schools in the competition, so to receive four nominations is a great achievement. The SGS nominations were: Best Set, Best Female Singer, Best Ensemble Scene, and Best Choreography. The director of the show, Ms Tansey, wants to thank all those who helped in the production, staff from all areas within the school and students. The cast and crew were fantastic and the nominations are truly a huge recognition of the work of this amazing group of students. "I couldn't be prouder of them all!" says Ms Tansey.



BEFORE LOCKDOWN...

BEFORE LOCKDOWN...

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BEFORE LOCKDOWN...

NEWS



IRISH ANGUS GIRLS

Before the school closed due to Covid 19, our Irish Angus Beef Schools Competition finalists had a busy few weeks. Our "Angus girls", who are currently rearing their 5 Angus calves, visited the University of Limerick and Dovea Genetics in Thurles to help them to explore their theme 'Improving Irish Angus genetics and their benefits'. At the University of Limerick the girls had the opportunity to meet again with Dr Ken Byrne, lecturer in Animal production, and also meet Dr Sean Fair, lecturer in Animal reproduction and genetics. The girls got lots of information that will aid them with their project. At Dovea Genetics the girls had the opportunity to discuss the desirable traits of the Irish Angus breed. They also had the opportunity to enter the lab and experience first-hand how Artificial Insemination straws are made. The girls had a great day!!!



SGS POUCH PROJECT

Last Winter the reports of devastating bush fires in Australia circulated world-wide. SGS Science teacher, Sandra Tieran worked for several years just outside Sydney and she was particularly affected by the news of the devastation caused to the eco system there. She had seen, first-hand, the damage caused by fire, as the school she was working in had to be evacuated in late 2003 because of bush fires. It takes months for the eco-system to recover. "It really upsets me to see the plight of the baby kangaroos, wallabies, koalas and other marsupials who have lost their mothers to the fires." she said.

This was the inspiration behind Sligo Grammar School's Pouch Project. Sandra contacted Australian animal rescue charities and arranged to supply specially made pouches to help the charities care for the wounded and orphaned animals. The pouches mimic the marsupial pouch and provide the babies with comfort and warmth as they recover. An afternoon "Sewing Bee" was planned and two rooms were set up with sewing machines and work tables. Students from 5th year, along with several teachers, organised a production line, cutting fabric and sewing pouches. By the end of the afternoon about 25 pouches were made to be sent to NSW. Alongside the Sewing Bee, the 5th yr. students ran a bake sale to raise funds. €556 was raised and was split between two small animal rescue centres in some of the severely affected areas "I was absolutely delighted with the response from staff and students to both the bake sale and the sewing bee, and of course the many parents and students who baked cookies and cakes for us!" said Sandra. Thanks also to those who donated fabric for the pouches. We couldn't have done it without them all!" After a few weeks word came back that the pouches were put to good use and a lovely thank-you card came to the school from one of the Wildlife sanctuaries.





NEWS VALEDICTORY 2020

On Friday 15th May Sligo Grammar School said a final farewell to the class of 2020. This Valedictory ceremony was not the joyful social occasion it normally is, when students, parents and teachers gather together to celebrate their six years of Secondary school. Instead it took the form of a pre-recorded service which went up on-line for all to view on Friday 15th. Only the Headmaster, Deputy Principal, Senior co-ordinator and Chaplain were present in Calry church – and the camera operator of course. Students and teachers watched from their own homes as the names were read out and the Head and Deputy Head Boys and Girls addressed their classmates. Well done to Adam Greer, Grace O'Sullivan, Aife Haran and Max Stafford on their joint speech via Microsoft Teams. As well as not having a "normal" Valedictory Service, the class of 2020 will have no last day in school, no final farewell to their school mates and no Graduation Ball. These rites of passage will be sorely missed by staff as well as by the students themselves. We hope that we will have some "closure" in the form of a get-together at some stage in the not too distant future. Good luck to the class of 2020 in the Leaving Cert and in their future years.



SGS POLLINATOR PLAN

This year SGS has taken on the National Pollinator Plan. The aim of the plan is to encourage the planting of bird and bee-friendly plants. Our Tidy Towns and Sustainable Living groups in TY, in conjunction with the Science Department, started by planting raised beds with plants and flowers that are attractive to pollinators. In addition, the school sectioned off some of the lawn at the front of the school. This was not to be cut until the end of April, allowing the daisies and dandelions to grow freely. These weeds provide food for bees as they emerge from hibernation in Spring.



To complement the project, science teacher, Sandra Tiernan has put together



a video tour of her own bee-and-bird friendly garden for her students and colleagues to see how the National Pollinator Plan works in domestic gardens. Go to the Science page on the School Website to see the video.

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Transition Year

TY SKI TRIP

Every year the Transition Year class has an opportunity to go on a cultural trip abroad. For the last few years that has been a ski-ing trip to Northern Italy. This year the group went in the last week of January – before the outbreak of Covid19, we hasten to assure you! A group of over fifty TY students headed off to Santa Caterina Valfurva, Italy, for a week on the slopes. Setting off on a bus from Sligo in the dead of night, the students, accompanied by Mr Lynch, Mr Giblin, Ms Stinson and Ms McGuinness, travelled to Dublin airport, arriving next day in the snow-covered Italian Alps. The following days were spent on the slopes learning to ski and the evenings were occupied by activities including ice-skating and tobogganing. The students got a chance to explore the lovely town of Santa Catalina and do a bit of

TY ACTIVITIES

Transition Year enjoyed outings, activities and workshops during the term. These included a day out paintballing, a trip to Dublin for the IWish event, drumming workshops, trips to the theatre, a Wellbeing day in Sligo Tennis Club, and a visit to the Sligo Model Art Gallery. They also continued their fundraising activities, presenting a cheque to Concern and running a Bake Sale for charity.



souvenir shopping before returning to Sligo almost a week later. The trip was a great success – and quite exhausting for both teachers and students! It is one of the highlights of their years in secondary school, and is very important in forming those bonds of friendship that last for years. Thanks so much to the teachers for giving up their time to take the TYs away.



BE-FOR-LOCK-





SPORT HOCKEY

The Connacht junior hockey season gets under way after Christmas each year. The First Year and U15 teams had been training hard all year since September. A big thank you to Mr Frazer who helped out greatly in coaching the 1st year squad. Another big thank you to Hadley Scott and Saoirse Gillmor who helped coach the younger players every Monday and Wednesday after school. The 1st year team had their first outing as a squad at the Ursuline College Blitz. The girls played matches against St. Mary's Bower, Athlone, Coláiste Iognáid (Jes), Salerno Secondary School and Taylors Hill, all in Galway, as well as Seamount College, Kinvara. They also played in a local derby against the Ursuline College, Sligo. They learned a lot as a team and some of the girls improved so much that they were promoted to play on the U15 team. We look forward to building on the experience of this year.



The U15 squad worked hard all season with one aim in mind; to get to the Connaught Finals of the Lupton Cup. As a first-year group they suffered a lot of defeats, but this was turned around this year.

The Junior squad remained unbeaten in the North West League against schools from Raphoe, Derry, Omagh, and Cookstown. In the Connaught League the girls still remained unbeaten before Lockdown. The most notable results in this League were a 2-2 draw with Coláiste Iognáid (Jes), a 1-1 draw with Salerno Secondary School and a 3-2 win over Taylors Hill, all Galway teams. And we DID make it to the Connaught Semi-Finals! Unfortunately, though, we never got our big day out due to Covid19.



What a fantastic season for a dedicated and committed team and we look forward to season 20/21. Well done all.



Lessons learned!

LEFT:

The Junior Hockey players, post-match, in their winter woolies.

The previous trip saw our bus break down in Ballindine for 4 hours on a cold February Friday. It was fun though!!

Our Senior A Girls Hockey Team emerged as winners in the Halliday League against Salerno Secondary School, Galway. Having lost no matches all season the team met Salerno on Friday 17th January at home in SGS. In what was a tense final, with Salerno receiving a short corner early in the game, the SGS girls managed to successfully hold the opposition off, with goals from Saoirse Gillmor and Lara Swann. Despite the freezing conditions the senior school turned out in force to support the girls and the final score was 2 - 0 to the Grammar School. What a great way to end their school hockey career for 6th years Imogen Wray and Erin Nielsen (captain)!



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SPORT

KAYAKING

ROWING



Like much of school life this term, the Lockdown really impacted our Kayakers. The SGS club was building towards the Junior Liffey Descent which was called off due to Covid19. Despite this, it is good to report that the club is very active, with a particularly good beginners class on Tuesdays where numbers have been big. Even with the stormy, inclement weather we had, our kayakers didn't miss a session all year which is a testament to our paddlers. The Kayaking club currently has 32 active paddlers who paddle Tuesdays and Fridays. We also have had access to pool sessions on a Sunday which has been great for our more experienced paddlers who have been able to work on their rolls and advanced skills. The club is open to all year groups.

GIRLS ACTIVE

Girls Active has been running in Sligo Grammar School for the past number of years. The project is designed to encourage teenage girls to get involved in sports and activity. In SGS the girls-only group meets weekly and this year they undertook a gym session together every Monday. On Thursday 5th March the group attended the Girls Active Festival at Sligo IT. Over 200 girls from participating schools took part in a fun filled activity day. The SGS girls met groups from all around the region and enjoyed the whole experience.



In early January, SGS Rowing Club headed for the University of Limerick to compete at the National Indoors Rowing Competition. Our crew was made up of first year students, Harry Graham, Finn Reid, Ben Lawlor and Alan Lawlor. The crew arrived in time to take a tour of the UL Arena and the elite gym before starting their warm-up for the first event. The time trail for Junior 14 boys was set at 4 minutes and each individual had to row as far as they could in that time. Finn came out best at 920 metres while Harry was close to him at 909m. After the first race there was time to take a tour of the UL Boathouse. The students got to try out the indoor rowing tank, view the launch pontoon on the River Shannon, and check out the boats and rowing equipment in the boat bays. Back in the Arena they got a chance to watch Olympic medallist and World Champion Paul O'Donovan race in the 2,000 metre event. In the afternoon the boys were on again in a 500m sprint race. In a reverse of the morning results Harry managed to come home ahead of Finn in a time of 1 min 59 seconds while Finn completed it in 2:04. The brothers Alan Lawlor and Ben Lawlor finished in times of 2:14 and 2.26 respectively. Then came the 2000m team event. The SGS crew were in a group of 14 teams including schools from Galway, Enniskillen and Limerick. The crew fought well and finished in a time of 8 minutes and 20 seconds placing them 10th overall. It was a great day for the lads who are new to the sport and they are looking forward to next year. Many thanks to coach Ronan Ivers who made it all possible!

BEFORE LOCKDOWN...



SPORT

JUNIOR RUGBY

The juniors had a good 2019/2020 season. Still a young squad, they were beaten by the eventual winners of the Connacht Schools Junior Cup in the semi-final of that competition. Many of the boys are back again for next season and no doubt their time will come. Well done to Captain Alastair Hill. A big thanks to Mr. Staunton and Diarmuid O'Dowd-Hill for their coaching throughout the season.



U14s RUGBY

The U14s Showed great commitment during the year. They won about 50% of their matches and were well captained by Isaac Marsden. As a team-building trip they were to go see Ireland v Italy at the Aviva Stadium, but that match was unfortunately called off due to Covid19. Never fear, boys, we'll get there in the future! A big thanks to Mr Alan Brandon and Luke Sexton for coaching.

PRE-LOCKDOWN WHOLE-SCHOOL DAY OUT!

Little did we ever think, as we got on the buses to Galway on Wednesday 11th March, that we were on the cusp of a National Lockdown. The mood was celebratory and full of anticipation as a broad cross-section of pupils from all years travelled to the showgrounds in Galway to cheer on our Rugby Heroes in the final of the Connacht Schools Rugby Cup. In a tense and nail-biting match, played in foul weather, the supporters never once stopped their cheering and support for their team. In both Semi-final and Final they were a credit to themselves and their school and we salute them!

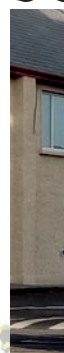
SENIOR RUGBY



The senior squad had a fantastic year in rugby. They won the Senior Connacht Schools Rugby League in December and were ready for battle when they came back to school in January. A fantastic 22-14 win at home in the Connacht Schools Cup Semi Final against Roscommon CBS meant a place in the final before St Patrick's Day. A wonderful season ended in heartbreak as SGS were narrowly beaten 14-12 on March 11th in Galway. The squad were ably led by William Whelan and Fiachra Staunton. Each player can be proud that they won a Connacht League and gave everything to the cause throughout the year. A huge thanks to Mr Gavin, Gavin Foley and Diarmuid O'Dowd-Hill who coached them so well throughout the year.



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BEFORE LOCKDOWN...

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SGS in Lockdown



Although, like all schools, Sligo Grammar School closed its doors on Thursday 12th March, SGS, its staff and past pupils rallied to the cause and donated time, talents and facilities to help in the continuing efforts of the wider community to contain the Covid19 epidemic. The school made its car-park immediately available for use by Sligo University Hospital and it has been filled with HSE staff and patients cars since then. In the first days of Lockdown SGS donated goggles – raided from the science labs – to the hospital in an effort to help with the provision of PPE. Needless to say, Sligo Grammar School is very proud to be involved in the community-wide effort to slow the spread of Covid19.

Anyone who has taken a few moments to follow our Website, Facebook and Twitter accounts will see how the school as a whole has rallied to help keep spirits up and keep in touch. Teachers and students have “checked in” to say hello and spread a bit of advice and general cheer! Mr Cradock, Ms Hynes, Ms Kilroy and Ms Tiernan all got involved, while Mr Henry posted a lovely video featuring the teachers saying hello to their students from Lockdown. Canon Bamber also took the time to put together School Assemblies and take a moment to think about how we are dealing with the Lockdown. It wasn't only teachers who reached out this term but students as well. Mr O'Malley's class, 5D and the Junior hockey team put together videos from their own houses to say “hi” to one another - and everyone else. Lastly, Kacper Palamarczuk sent in a rugby ball “keepie-uppie” challenge! We don't know yet whether anyone beat his record! All these videos can be seen on the SGs Website in “Gallery 2019/2020” as well as on the official Facebook page and Twitter.

...AFTER LOCKDOWN...





SGS On-Line

CAN-SAT PROJECT IN LOCKDOWN



Lockdown has not stopped five of our fifth years from continuing with their CanSat project. The team of Michael Bezborodov (Team Leader and Structural & Design Engineer), Jeremiah Egberongbe (Electronics and Circuitry Engineer), Shammass Huq (Software Systems Engineer), Jacob Craig (Community Outreach and Public Relations) and Max Vandergrijn (Finance and Funding), have been working together on-line to complete the design and construction of their CanSat. This is a European Space Agency competition and is run by ESRO Ireland, the Institutes of Technology and CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory. The SGS CanSat is designed to record GPS, temperature, atmospheric pressure, humidity and UV light orientation. It uses a 1km-range antenna to transmit and receive data. As part of the project the team visited Carbury National School to introduce 3rd class pupils to basic circuitry as well as to the joys of STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths! Like many projects this year, the competition final has been postponed but we wish the boys all the best when things are up and running again, and well done for keeping it going through Lockdown.



IRISH ANGUS PROJECT IN LOCKDOWN

Despite the six 5th year students being unable to meet up for 9 weeks, since Lockdown began, they have been working as hard as ever, as a team, on their project for the Certified Irish Angus beef schools competition.

The lockdown caused many potential obstacles for the girls, but with their strong teamwork and love for this competition, they managed to continue with their weekly meetings on Zoom - to continue planning and organising some great things for their project.

As part of their journey in the competition the girls wanted to fundraise for "Make A Wish, Ireland." Emma explains; "We decided to choose "Make A Wish, Ireland" because becoming one of the five finalists in the Certified Irish Angus Beef schools competition was our wish and it came true! We have had the opportunity to experience so many amazing things in this competition and we are so grateful, that's why we'd like to give the opportunity to a child with an illness to have their wish come true."

Unfortunately due to Coronavirus, their planned fundraising events and ideas were postponed, but that didn't stop the girls from pursuing their fundraising goals!

They set up a GoFundMe page and so far they have raised a fantastic €1420.

The girls would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who kindly donated!

As a part of the competition the students are rearing five calves. The calves recently went out onto fresh grass and are now as happy as can be!

The girls are missing their visits to the five Irish Angus calves, but they know they are being well looked after by Johnathan Harte, to whom they would like to say a big 'Thank You' for continuing to look after their calves so well, during these hard times.

The girls look forward to reuniting again when it is safe to do so!

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LIFE IN LOCKDOWN

Some of the Magazine Committee share their Lockdown...

Saoirse

Day 29. I think. Time is different here, in quarantine. Days are not days. Weeks meld into one. Maybe that's because nothing has happened that defines the days. Nothing changes - day in, day out. I feel strangely disconnected from reality, hidden away in the hills of Leitrim. What if when we come out of this, we will have forgotten how to interact with others? Could human development take a backward step after the world has banished us to our homes? What will it be like - to have to wear different clothes every day, and not just my favorite big hoodie? These are certainly strange times...

Day 37. I woke. I ate. I snoozed. I ate. I went to bed.

Day 42. The only constant thing in my life is school. Apparently, it's good to have a routine so we have to be up at 9am. If I am being honest, I never remember anything that happens before 10:30. As I have said, time doesn't pass like it used to on The Outside. My day is a combination of long naps and "Netflixbinging" and then realising I have a science powerpoint due in 2 hours. And I have to bargain with my sister as we only have 1 laptop and I swear the remote islands off east Asia have better internet than we do. A good quote for quarantine that seems to sum up daily living is "Online classes are cool until you're chilling on a Sunday then realise you had class an hour ago and it's actually Tuesday"

Day 59. ITS SHOP DAY TODAY. Hm. That must mean its Monday.... I am not ashamed to admit that this has to be the highlight of my now hermit-like existence. The new flavors of yoghurts, the state of the bananas, the strange carryings-on that are still going on in The Outside. These wild, new, exciting moments of my Mondays make them a day to look forward to. When one of my parents brave the Outside to fight over the few remaining bags of flour or cereal. And when I say "brave", I mean it. Nothing is more ferocious than a fight between two parents over the last carton of orange juice, the new form of barter for their bored kids.

Day 65. It's gone. Listen. Listen to the silence. How can that be you ask? Where is my family? Where is the constant, unending, pestering sense of a complete loss of personal space? Surely - no - it cannot be - that they have left?! About 20 minutes ago, this forgotten, beautiful silence returned to my house. My sisters and parents went for a walk. I hope they get lost. No offence. But now I can eat my Special K from a cup on my couch and watch Friends without someone trying to practice their violin scales in my ear or my mother popping in and asking me with false positivity "why don't you go for a quick walk - you haven't left the house in days" That's right Margaret, I haven't left the house in 4 days and guess what - I haven't changed out of my pjs in 4 days either. Now leave me alone to have the tv on in the background while I shop online for clothes I can't afford.

Kate

Life changed dramatically for us all on March 12th, 2020. We took the news of schools closing with high spirits and perhaps naivety. However soon we realised that it wasn't all it seemed. I remember sitting at my kitchen table on St Patrick's Day evening watching Leo Varadkar's address to the nation. I recall thinking that this day would be remembered in Irish history books for the rest of time, and that no one would forget the feeling evoked inside them when he said that the worst was yet to come. This was serious and as the number of deaths began to rise, we as a country needed to do everything in our power to fight the spread of the virus. This resulted in drastic changes to our daily routine.

What does this mean for me? It means that I have to stay at home, and I can no longer go to school. Shops and workplaces are closing down. It means that my brother had to come home from college and my other brother living in London, decided to stay there and work from home. This is the new reality and we have to make the most of it. I remember my mother telling me early on, that time now would be viewed as 'before the pandemic' and after the pandemic. Both of my parents work in the council and are going into work every day. Now more than ever the community needs support as restrictions are put in place and people's freedom is limited. A positive but sometimes challenging aspect of quarantine is that we have to spend more time with our family. Card and board games are being played, movies are being watched, quizzes are held, and yoga was tried but didn't last too long! I live on the edge of Sligo town and usually the roads around me are busy and noisy, but now there is an obvious change in the levels of traffic, and it is mostly walkers and joggers to be seen around. Here I am now as TV is ending and 'summer' is officially starting. We face the unknown of what summer holds and what school will be like next year.

AFTER LOCKDOWN





...AFTER LOCKDOWN...

Sarah

The time ticks by slowly in lockdown, the same basic routine day in day out. Day 54 in full lockdown and it feels like hundreds. Nothing new happens; it's all just the same every-day. Listening to the cases and death tolls hum from the six O'clock news brings a dim feeling to the house but as the numbers begin to fall it is a relief, but It's not over yet. Will it ever be over. Nobody knows. As the restrictions begin to lift nothing really changes for our high-risk society, living life on edge at the thought of catching this eerie virus. The thought of ventilators to try and keep us alive, of the pain it causes to attempt to even breathe and the unearthly feeling of not even being able to taste or smell anything would worry anybody. It's so unusual not being able to visit family and friends, a birthday celebration has turned into "happy birthday" messages and calls. Coming from a big family who loves to celebrate and visit all the time and have BBQ's and family dinners, it's like an alternate universe. Trips to the farm or even to the bog become exciting, being able to get out and see cars on the road, to see turf or cattle bring a sense of normality to this strange time. The first-time ever I was happy about having to get up early to go to the bog. Thinking of silage season starting is bringing some joy to the household, a sense of normality. Getting to spend our days from morning 'till night toiling away saving the silage and hay. It will give us a purpose and something to make those hours pass by faster, we all long for it. To get out of the house for some calmness and tranquility. Seven people including a one-year-old is crazy at the best of times. It feels like the walls are closing in. The arguing over who needs the laptop for homework is part of our daily routine now. We all crave to go back to normality, but will we ever go back to that normality we all crave? Will life ever be the same? Is this our new normality? Will going to the shops be changed forever? Will school return? Those early school mornings, the long days, the loads of schoolwork and homework, the things we all wished were over were quickly snatched from us and now we long for their return. It's easy to forget the luxuries we all had but never knew it. As much as we hate this strange and bizarre time we must not give in. We must beat the virus so life will return to normality when the time is right. But for now the excitement of feeding the cattle and even going to the bog will have to do.

TY LOCKDOWN PORTRAITS



Hannah

Thankfully I live in the countryside so I'm not finding isolation too bad because the weather has been lovely and I have been outside a lot. The mountain nearby is a little higher than Benbulbin and we climbed it twice in the last 2 weeks just for something different to do! It's nice having time to do things like this as a family - normally everyone is too busy. However, my favourite local places are the beach and the pier but I couldn't even go there because they are both over 2km away. My dog is loving isolation as there is always someone to follow around the house or to take her for yet another walk.

One of the good things about quarantine is that my siblings have come back home from college and work. It's nice to have them back as I would find isolation very boring without them. Unfortunately, the Wi-Fi is feeling the strain of having 3 laptops and Netflix going at once, and the fridge is being emptied a lot quicker. Mum has to go to work still, so I have more cooking to do than usual. I am very glad I had TY H. E. classes because French toast featured for lunch several days.

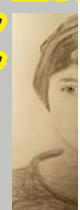
The worst thing about lockdown is that I miss my friends - it would almost be worth going back to school just to see everyone! I'm sad the Gaelic season is cancelled and plans for the summer are obliterated but at least we made it to Italy and back before Corona hit!



IF I COULD

If I could turn back time, I would appreciate it more. When I think of the ability to control my life, I feel a year ago, a computer, a Mars, a dusty, a turbulent, a stand, a be, a force, a river, a thing, a year, the ability, a bustling, a heat, a mountain, the great, the, Today, it would, that I, simple, no global, and res, home, a be no, nothing, friends, ball pit, we would

1st



...AFTER LOCKDOWN...



ITS

IF I COULD HAVE ONE SUPERPOWER...

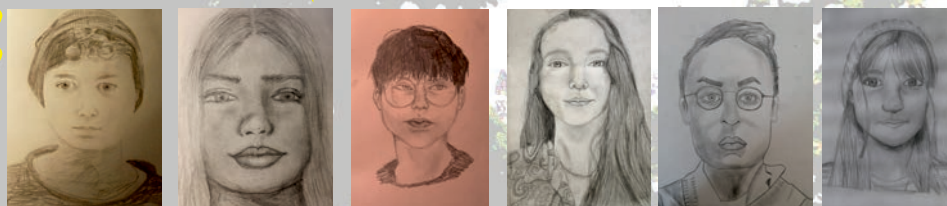
If I could have one superpower it would be to turn back the hands of time because over the last number of weeks I have developed a brutal new appreciation for my old 'normal life', for what it meant to be free and for the beauty of life's simple pleasures.

When one hears the word 'superpower', the mind conjures up fantastical imagery. Perhaps the ability for superhuman strength and endurance? Perhaps the gift of speed and agility? Perhaps increased abilities of the mind, for asserting control, influence and power over others. One year ago, having a superpower would have held a completely different meaning for me. I would have been contemplating extraordinary visits to Mars, the chance to tiptoe and dance across the dusty red planet, to stare in awe at its expansive turbulent skies. Maybe I would have chosen to stand at the precipice of an erupting volcano, to be capable of withstanding its massive violent force. To witness the glowing lava meander, like a river of deadly treacle, turning to dust everything in its path.

A year ago, a superpower to me would have been the ability to instantaneously teleport to any bustling city of my choice, to feel the oppressive heat of the Atacama desert, to walk the perilous mountain peaks of Nepal or to be submerged in the green oceans of the world's thickest rainforests. This is not the case anymore.

Today, if I had to choose a superhuman power, it would be to turn back the hands of time so that I could enjoy and appreciate the absolutely simple things I took for granted. There would be no global pandemic, no lockdowns, no worries and restrictions, I would go 20 minutes from my home and visit my grandparents. There would be no fear. We would have lunch and talk about nothing in particular. I would meet up with my friends. We would lounge on the freshly cut football pitch, eat some junk food and have a chat, we would have a laugh together.

1st YR LOCKDOWN PORTRAITS



I would drive to the beach. I would sit and listen to the sounds of the waves; I miss that sound. The warm sand would get stuck between my toes, the clear water would sparkle like diamonds in the afternoon sun. I would go to an ice cream parlour, and I would order the biggest and most extravagant ice cream I could imagine, I would savor every last delightful bite. If I could have a superpower, it would be to have the simple pleasures of my old life back, to turn back time and really enjoy everything I had. It has become apparent to me over the last number of weeks that what we consider to be 'super' is all relative. I would do anything now to return to school, carefree, with no worries of a creeping contagion silently spreading amongst us. I would be happy to take a trip to the shops to get food with my mum. I would bemoan none of it. If I had a superhuman power I would return to that life in a heartbeat.

Jack Kennedy



Sea of Pandemics

by Kyla Kelly

The beaches were vast and long,
The sea consumed the land in minutes,
I suppose that's how they feel,
To be swallowed up by something so vast.
In the sea of pandemics,
I stumbled across the headline,
'It's time to head to one of Sligo's beaches'
Published August 5th of last year,
How a headline changes in a matter of months.
Now as the sea rises,
It swallows up the sand,
But not only just that,
A sea of fighters swim lonely,
Afraid to come out of their shell.

AFTER LOCKDOWN...



