



# SLIGO GRAMMAR SCHOOL



## SUMMER EDITION





# lockdown learning

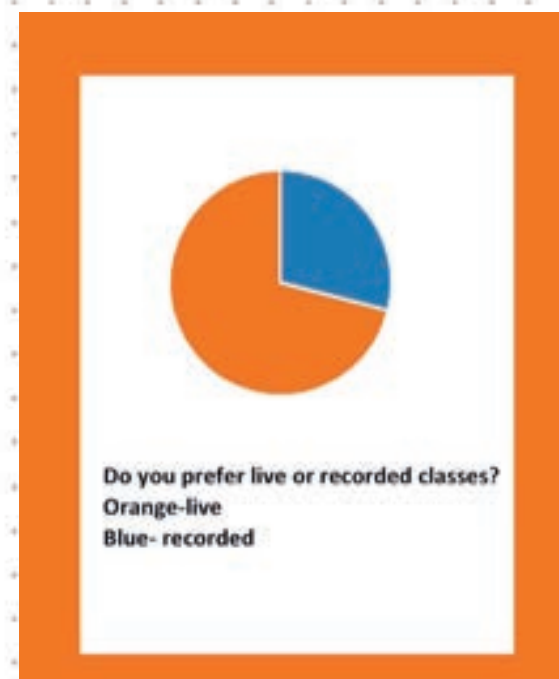
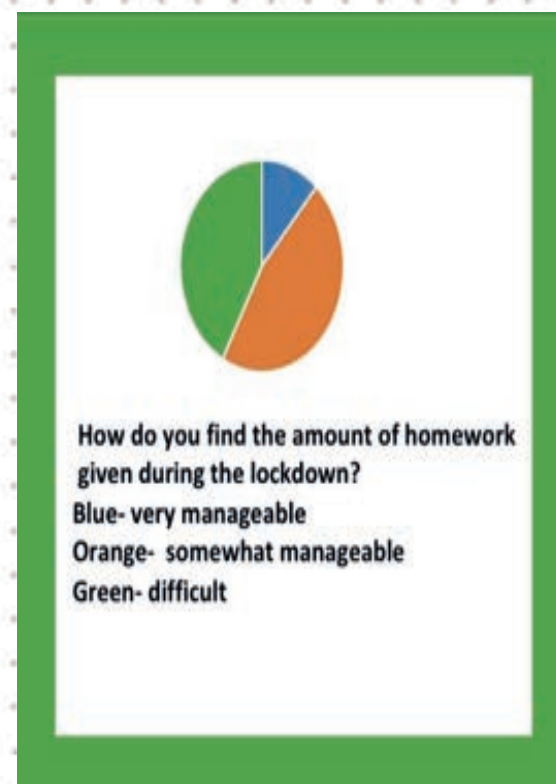
With another lockdown, adjustments had to be made as the school reverted back to online learning on Microsoft Teams. Students continued to study hard, complete assignments and attend live or recorded classes for all subjects.

Many of our second and third year students completed CBAs this lockdown. CBAs are Classroom Based Assessments, on which students are graded. This goes towards an indicator on their Junior Cycle Certificate. The majority of students did either one or two CBAs from home. Students had mixed feelings about doing the work from home. While many of them found it far less stressful, others found it very demanding.

Much of the response argued that there was less pressure on students when completing CBAs from home. Students are able to relax in their own workplace, and work on their projects in their own time.

On the other hand, some students found it harder to get help while at home, as they could not talk to their teachers in person.

Technical issues and distractions proved to be the greatest difficulties.

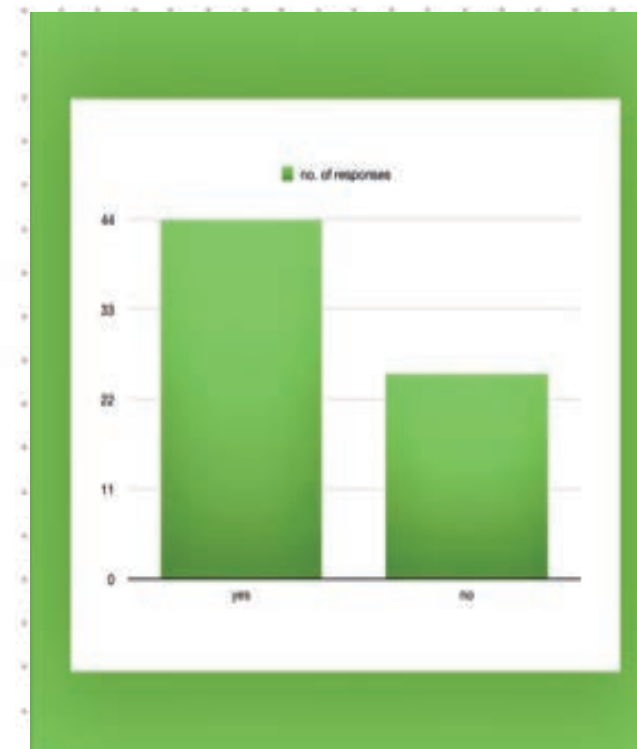


Through polls we conducted with students from throughout the school, we have seen that a large majority of the students have had an overall negative experience with regard to technology during online schooling. Most students were plagued by technical difficulties which stopped them from participating in some aspects of online school (such as a lack of a microphone or internet troubles). Many students felt overwhelmed with the amount of work. This was all compounded by the fact that distractions are a lot more common while at home. However, students still managed to keep motivated with exercise playing an important part as well as sticking to daily routines.

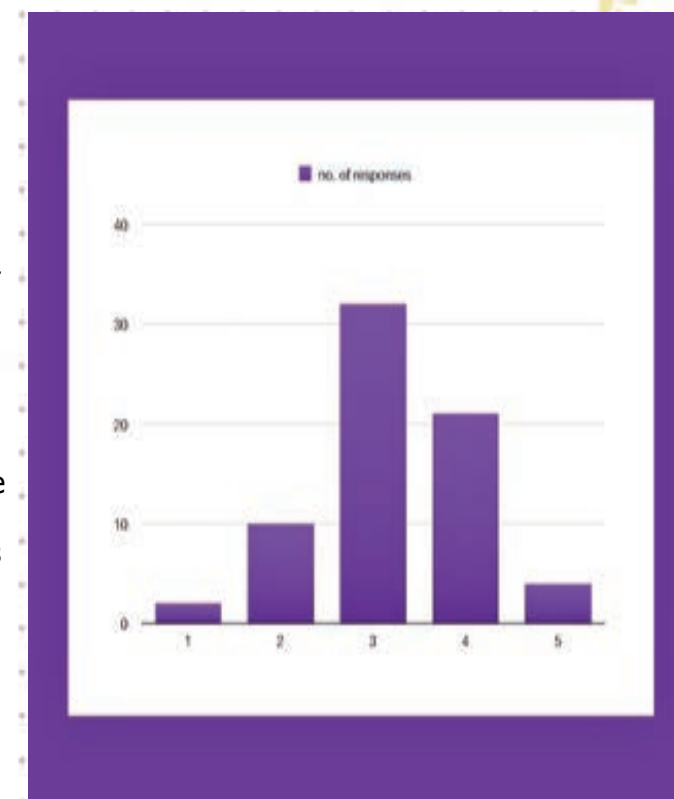
Teachers from all over the school faced challenges with the sudden return to home-based learning. Many teachers missed interacting face-to-face with students and found it difficult to get some of their students engaged in online classes. One teacher explained that, when teaching in regular classrooms, it is usually easier to tell whether students understand the content of the lesson by simply looking at their faces and observing their body language, whereas online classes have made this more difficult.

Another teacher felt that it was more challenging to try to teach newer class groups that they are less familiar with, such as 1st Year and Transition Year students. Some teachers even had to work from home while looking after their own children!

In spite of these challenges, many teachers benefited from some aspects of teaching classes on Microsoft Teams, through both live and recorded classes. Teachers have found that they enjoy the familiarity of teaching the same way they would have using a whiteboard or a projector, and have benefited from being able to watch short clips and videos alongside students and maintain class discussions. Other teachers preferred to use recorded lessons, as it allowed students to take a break from the screen, get some fresh air and work independently on assignments in their own time.



**Did technical difficulties get in the way of online schooling?**



**Rate how manageable online school was (1 being not at all manageable, 5 being completely manageable)**

All teachers interviewed agreed that they felt a lot more prepared for this lockdown compared to the last, as they were both more comfortable using Teams and had become used to teaching without books following the introduction of COVID-friendly guidelines in school last September. This allowed for a smoother transition to remote learning.







## Birdwatch Ireland

Mr. Michael Bell of Birdwatch Ireland came to the school to talk to the TY Sustainable Living class. He spoke to students about the richness of Irish wildlife and the many challenges our native birds and animals face. He asked the students if they would be interested in doing a study of the birds that feed within SGS grounds and, consequently, a number of TYs set up a Bird Feeding Club.

Sligo Tidy Towns provided sunflower seeds and lard balls for the project and our very talented maintenance men, Harry Nairn and Michael Fadian, designed and made a bird feeding table for the club. It is located in the courtyard of the school which is quiet and peaceful and will hopefully attract garden birds.



## Disability Workshop

During first two weeks back from the third lockdown, each TY class took part in an Educational Disability workshop. This workshop was run by Katie Burke and Yvonne Rainey. It consisted of several fun and instructional quizzes and games and went on throughout the entire school day. The workshop started off with the year being divided into teams. The TYs learned about celebrities and their disabilities and completed a braille quiz, in which each of the teams had to decipher codes.

Katie and Yvonne also brought five wheelchairs for the TYs to try out. They were taught how to properly lift someone in a wheelchair onto a step and how to come back down again. Intense wheelchair races took place soon after!

The teams then played charades with sign language and competed in a blindfolded game where they had to place wooden shapes into a box with cut out holes in different shapes.

Overall, the TYs found this educational workshop to be engaging and valuable. One student said "I really enjoyed the workshop, I got more of an insight into what life is like with a disability. Overall, I loved this workshop, I had a laugh and learned lots."



## Archery

Since we've returned to school, TYs have been lucky enough to participate in a variety of workshops, including an archery workshop, taught by John Barrett. All classes participated in two separate sessions, they learnt how to shoot safely and practiced hitting target boards. The sessions were greatly enjoyed by the TYs, a big thank you to John!



## Commendable Students



This year's fourth years are definitely making the most of an alternative TY. Méabh Gillmor got involved with the Academy of the Near Future, which is a project run by Smart Docklands. The project aims to begin a new TY programme that will increase awareness and utilisation of technology, create smarter cities and promote entrepreneurship. "Visioneers", the student advisory board for the project, is an attempt by the team running Academy of the Near Future to assess what Transition Year students would find helpful in the new learning programme. It is a board of 12 students, including Méabh, from all over Ireland, who participated in a focus group for two days. Well done Méabh!

Another student Saoirse O'Donovan saw an opportunity to improve her performing skills while stuck at home. The Gaiety School of Acting were holding a Tenemos Youth Theatre Event on Friday February 19th. Saoirse was accepted through an application process and was one of the lucky 150 inspiring nationwide performers accepted for this event.

Participants did workshops in movement, Shakespeare, character building, and manifesto (writing, producing, and performing your own work). The event ended with a Q&A session with the 2020 GSA Graduates. Congratulations Saoirse on being selected!



During lockdown, TY student Paul Daffy took part in the Law Society of Ireland's Solicitors of the Future programme. The project encourages TY students to consider a career in law. Students are given an insight into the daily work of a solicitor as well as showing them how relevant the law is to our daily lives. Workshops, guest speakers, courtroom activities and a mock trial are all part of this incredible programme. The participants would have visited the Criminal Courts of Justice and a large commercial law firm, if it weren't for current restrictions. Well done Paul!



# TY

## Drumming

On the 19th of April, TYs took part in a drumming workshop hosted by Peter Crann. Peter hosts drumming workshops with different schools and organisations across the country, and is the founder of We Drum Ireland. He brought in a variety of instruments for the TYs to play, ranging from the large djembe drums, to small percussion pipes. Peter introduced the idea of different sounds and rhythms and TY students were given the opportunity to play a variety different instruments. The TYs said that they hugely enjoyed the event and recommended that the workshop be carried over into future Transition Years.



## Boxercise

Over the course of six weeks, all TY students took part in 'boxercise' workshops. Run by Áine Conlon Oates, from Collooney Kickboxing Club, 'boxercise' is a combination of boxing and kick-boxing. Students learned various kicks, punches and jabs, worked in pairs and took turns to hold pads for each other. The workshops were initially supposed to run over four weeks, but due to popular demand they were extended for another two weeks. Thank you so much to Áine for creating such fun workshops, they were enjoyed by all.



## Hip-Hop

All TYs were fortunate to take part in four dance and hip-hop workshops over the last month, including Irish dancing and Zumba. The hip-hop workshops were hosted by Sarah Middleton, founder of Beat It dance school in Strandhill. Students stretched, folded, took part in short choreographed dances and learnt basic break-dancing moves, such as the elephant stand and baby freeze. Students reported it was a great way to exercise and have fun with their friends. Thank you to Sarah for coming in to do the workshops!



## SUPing

Fourth year classes were also given the opportunity to go SUPing (Stand-Up Paddling) during the last two weeks of school. Students walked down to Sligo Rowing Club where they were met by Niall Harte, founder of Sligo SUP, who brought them out onto the Garavogue. The stand-up-paddleboarding was greatly enjoyed, and students recommended the workshops to future TY classes.



## Stripe Workshop

Over the 23rd and 24th of March Transition Years attended a two-day presentation hosted by Stripe via Zoom. Stripe is a financial services and software company that has dual headquarters in Dublin and San Francisco. They create products such as apps for businesses to handle their financial dealings and help to avoid fraud, from both the business' and the consumers' end.

On the first day, they talked to the TYs about various aspects of their business, such as their method of marketing and about how target marketing works. They also told students that although many of their employees did not originally plan to work in their sector they found it very interesting and managed to learn about the industry and enjoy the work. They also told us about the law and legal issues involved in the running of an international financial advisory service such as Stripe.

The following day, they covered the creation of websites that can accept online payments. This included the basics of how to create a website. The TYs found the talk to be engaging and beneficial.



## Bódhrán Making

On the 18th and 19th of April, a bodhrán workshop was hosted by Michael Vignoles for the TY students. Michael gives workshops to students in schools across the country, teaching how to make and play bodhráns. The workshop took place over two days. Wood, goatskin, hammers and nails were given out to create bodhráns, wooden planks were polished and goatskins were washed. Students also chose a design to decorate their bodhrán with. At the end of the workshop students learned some basic rhythms which they played on their bodhráns. Finally, pictures were taken of the TY's artistic bodhráns!

## Virtual Talks

SGS has always been keen on guest speakers for all year groups and Covid-19 hasn't changed that.

SGS 5th year Agricultural Science class had a Zoom call on February 10th with Donal Sheehan from the Bride Project in Cork on farming with nature and had to complete a project on conservation of the environment through changes in agricultural practices.

TY Students have also enjoyed a variety of different talks. One of the most interesting was during Lockdown, on Thursday 25th of February, when they got to enjoy a talk with former Mountjoy Prison Governor, John Lonergan. He spoke about his experience with the prison systems in Ireland, and about the rights and rehabilitation of people in prison. It was a very thought-provoking talk.





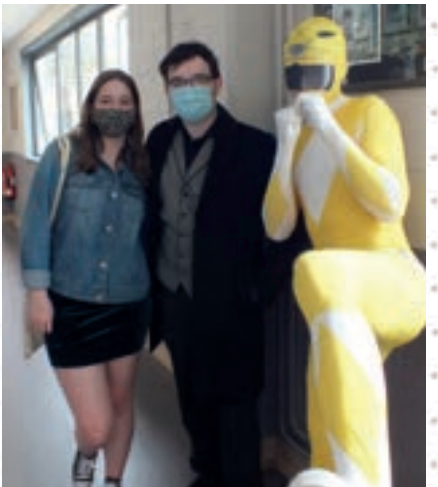
# creative week

## Creative Week

The week of the 17th-21st of May was Creative Week in SGS. Creative Week is a week that is organised across the country by the Arts Council. It is conducted differently across secondary schools nationwide as the school liaison teacher can change the plans to fit with their school. The Creative School's Week hosts both online and in-person events to show off students' talent, artistry and innovation. So, what is Creative Week about? The Creative School Programme celebrates activities in schools involving both face-to-face and online events. This years Creative Week was organised by the school's liaison Ms. McGuinness and the Transition Year Creative Week Committee, with the help of some of the teachers and the 5th yr. LCVP class. The whole school got involved with a variety of activities during the week.

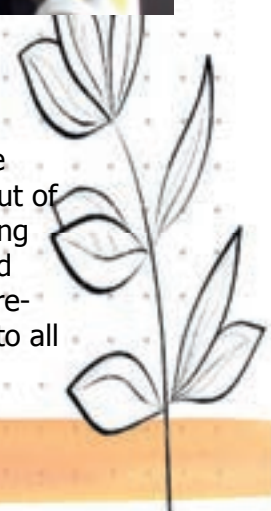
The biggest project of the week was the preparation for a permanent art installation that will be up for display in the next school term. The Whole-School "Mask On - Mask Off" photo-collage will display photos of everyone in the school, a photo of each person with their mask on, and a photo with their mask off.

The project is designed to remember the changes we had to make and the difficulties faced this year due to Covid-19. The rest of the week attempted to serve as a distraction from the hardships of Covid-19. The 1st years participated in dancing workshops with Saoirse O'Donovan throughout the week. All junior school classes had an in-class bingo & a quiz hosted by TY students. Thank you to the TYs for organising these!



## Dress-Up Day

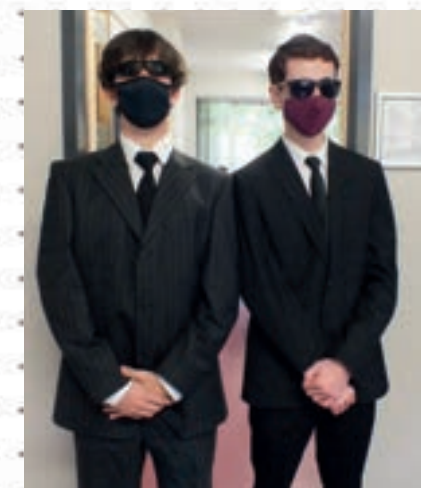
On Friday 14th May Ms. McGuinness's 5th yr. LCVP class organised a Dress-Up Day. The main themes that could be seen in the corridors were 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s style dress, movie stars, celebrities and fictional characters. It seemed that the teachers were the best dressed out of everyone. We saw Mr. O'Malley as a hippie, Ms. Treacy as Princess Leia, Mr. Cummins as a viking and Ms. Hynes as Madonna. Ms McGuinness and Ms. Kilroy gave prizes to the best dressed and most creative costumes in each year. €850.50 was raised by the students and a cheque was presented to the North West Hospice on the 25th of May by representatives of LCVP. Well done to all the organisers!



## Virtual Debate and Variety Show

Another activity that took place during the week was a virtual debate. On Wednesday, a virtual debate organised by the Creative Week Committee and SGS DebSoc took place for first, second and fourth years. They debated the motion "This house believes that Irish should be an optional subject", and voted for the side they thought was best on Microsoft Forms sent to them via Teams. Well done to our debaters, Alfie Barron, Anushka Pathak, Alanah Guckian Walton, Cameron Kilcoyne, Daithí Meehan and Ciara Ryan. Congratulations to the proposition for convincing the audience and winning by majority vote.

A Virtual Variety Show was broadcast on Friday. The show was organised by Leah Davidson and Alannah McAllister, with some help from Mr. O'Donnell. Students from all years submitted their prerecorded performances, which were then compiled and edited together. SGS showcased a wide variety of musical talent, from rapping to playing the organ. Well done to the organisers and everyone who took part!



## Leaving Cert 2021

Another year came to a close and we sadly bid farewell to the Leaving Cert class of 2021. It was a different "last day", but at least they had one - unlike last years 6th year class. The annual Teachers Vs 6th Yrs football match could not take place but an inter-6th yr one did instead. This was after the school-wide showing of the Valedictory Service, which, again, had to be prerecorded this year. We wish the Class of 2021 all the very best of luck with their exams!





# SGS Art

## The Most Beautiful Things - Méabh Gillmor

The beauty of nature can be seen in the early morning sun streaming through new leaves, setting them aglow and casting dappled shadows on the dewy grass. It's in the caress of a cold night's breeze when you fling your window open at 2am. It's in the tendrils of mist creeping over frosty fields, always in the corner of your eye. It's in the slow float of an amber leaf coming to rest upon the carpeted forest floor. It's in the shimmering reflection of light off a rippling, window-clear lake and in the feel of damp grains of sand in a child's scrunched-up toes. I sometimes find it hard to remember to appreciate the beautiful things around me, the natural wonders that pass me by every day. I find that every day I need to go outside, whether I just take time to relax and breathe in the rich, dark air in the moonlight, or run squealing into the frigid ocean. I love being outside.

I think that the current pandemic has opened many people's eyes to the world around them. The Irish population has found that with gyms and other facilities closed, they have to use their surroundings to stay active. This has led to frantic dog walks before dinner and leisurely strolls under the sun. Individuals and communities alike have been forced to move their exercise from the gym or park to the country lanes surrounding them. The population have realised how lucky we are to be surrounded by emerald and sage, rather than grey and darker grey.

I love to look at the sky. No matter what the weather or where I am, I love to look at the sky. To see the dark boughs of a pine tree silhouetted against a cornflower blue sky. To see the wisps of translucent cloud drifting serenely across a cerulean sky. To not be able to see anything but a low-hanging, dense layer of cloud the colour of a puddle with too much mud in it. To see sequin-silver stars flung out across the world, as if someone had scattered diamonds into the sky.

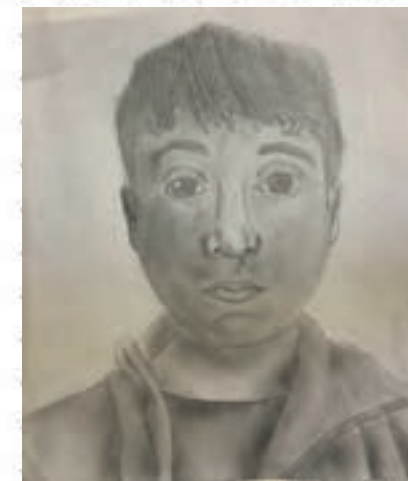
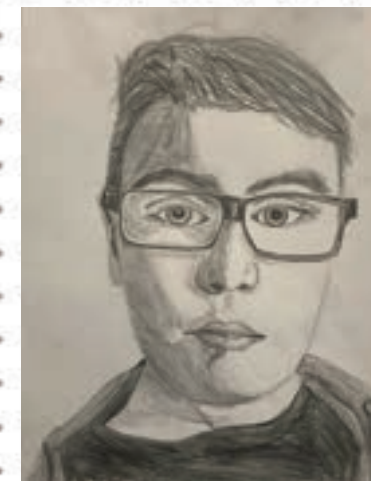
When I am outside, I am at peace. Even when little bits of the outside world make it inside, like the way my favourite chair in the sitting room lights up with sunlight at noon, or the wavering steam rising from a hot cup of coffee first thing in the morning, it makes me feel at peace to know that even when at my laptop or when writing an essay, the world I love is so very close. I know that no matter what happens, I can always go back outside and be serene again. The most beautiful things in life are the ones that are the most natural.



## Affection – Anushka Pathak

If I am a star then  
you are an entire galaxy;  
Shining so brightly that merely  
being in your presence induces some  
form of lovesick delirium,  
The kind that leads one into believing  
that you reciprocate their feelings.

For it is you that waltzes through the  
landscape of my dreams,  
Proud and profuse and proper,  
and it is you that stands next to me with  
Hair the colour of a thousand brightly  
burning suns,  
And a resounding laugh that resembles  
the gentle crash of waves.



## The Imagination of a Sculptor - Mia Clinch

Constructed in the cool shade of a weeping willow tree, it stands four foot high and five feet across. Ledge sloping slightly towards the ground, back tilted at a one-hundred-and-ten degree angle. Four steel legs remain clamped tightly into the earth. Three inch screws embedded in all it's joints. Two armrests, with intricate floral designs, positioned just slightly too high and narrow for comfort. They are cold to the touch and have seen little use. Glossy, denim-blue paint had been worn away on the seat, from the hundreds who have sat there, exchanging stories from "the good old days" or who was dating who. Talk of football matches, local politics, of weather or lambing season.

A rough, cement plaque had been planted in front of the bench, a foreign name and a date, engraved on the front. The person of whom the name belonged to has since been forgotten, though many would know it as the Oswin Dubois bench. To others, it would be the bench where they had their first kiss on a bitter November evening, or perhaps the regular meeting point of old friends. To some, Oswin's bench had acted as a place of refuge for weary wanderers, somewhere they could sleep when they had nowhere to go. Their heads resting on the worn seat, their body curved into foetal position so that their backs could be pressed up against the part of the bench that had been warmed by the sun. It wasn't comfortable, yet the bench offered a sense of security, of hospitality.

From the bench, passers-by were often observed, and stories sculpted for them by strangers. Embryonic ideas had often been carved into full-scale fantasies, and could occupy the imagination for days. If you were to walk past with a limp, you could be sure an artist would assign you a thrilling backstory. Perhaps you had injured your leg while on a top-secret mission stealing glamorous, emerald, jewellery from an empress, and had gotten caught on the way out. Or maybe you were a gold-medal Olympian, forced to retire due to injury and moved to a small town in west Ireland to hide from the fame. If you were deemed truly intriguing, your tale might become bedtime story, chiseled for the children of people watchers.

While popular with story sculptors, in the summer Oswin's bench was a bibliophile oasis. Many avid readers would lounge there, a dog-eared copy of 1984 in hand, protected by the shade from the willow tree. The south-westerly breeze flicking pages and ruffling hair on the myriad of bowed heads. The heads weren't really there though. They were in different worlds of heroines and heroes. They were witnessing great battles, and exploiting mysterious wardrobes. Though it didn't matter where they read, because novels took them elsewhere.



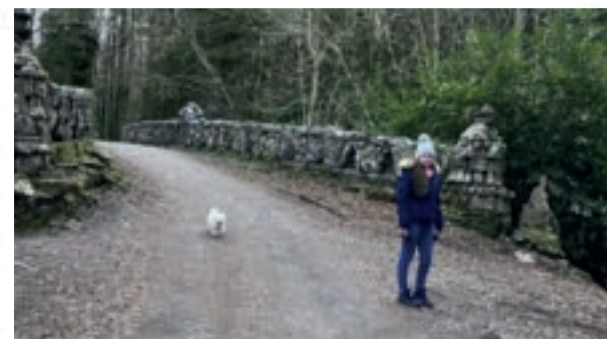




# Whole School Walk

## Whole School Walk

During Lockdown the PE Department asked students to join the Sligo Sport and Recreation Strava School challenge. Students and staff were encouraged to get out and walk, recording their progress via the Strava app. Many took part during the term, and, on Friday 12th February, just as the Mid-Term Break began, staff and students of Sligo Grammar School switched off their computer screens and wrapped up well to go out and take a walk – together, but apart. See some of the photos that were taken by students and staff while out walking that day.



## SGS Gallery





# Irish Angus Beef

The Irish Angus Beef Competition is an All-Ireland Competition to promote the breeding of Irish Angus beef cattle. Sligo Grammar School has competed in this competition with great success. The prize is, initially, 5 Irish Angus calves which have to be reared to slaughter by the five groups of finalists. The project is then judged and an ultimate winning team is selected.

## Transition Year

This year two groups of TY students entered the competition. In the first stage, participants entered videos presenting their project which explored Sustainability and Consumer Awareness of the breed. The two groups of TYs were successful in this stage and continued to Stage 2 in April, which included an interview with an expert panel including members of the Irish Angus Producer Group, Kepak, ABP, and an Agricultural Science teacher. Finalists in Transition Year are Alex Harte, Conor Creaven, Francis Ellison, Joe Atwood, Gemma Baker, Orlando Van Der Grijn, Ben Hayden and Nancy Ryan-Jones. We wish them the best of luck.



## 6th Year

After two years of work, helping to raise five calves to slaughter, completing projects, visiting companies in the beef industry and writing reports, our 6th Year Irish Angus Beef finalists completed their final interview based on a 15,000 word final report. This interview, via Zoom, was an hour long with numerous experts on the interview panel, whose job it was to determine the overall National winner. The ultimate winners of the competition were announced on the 5th of May, and unfortunately our "cow girls" did not make it over the final hurdle. Their achievement, however was huge, and the school is, rightly, very proud of Rosie Wright, Genevieve Cox, Emma O'Gorman, Laura West, Sarah Cunningham and Rebecca Harte.



# Student Voice

## Thoughts on a Lockdown Leaving Cert. Year

2020 was a extremely unprecedented and difficult year for everyone, but for the 2020 graduating class it was especially disappointing. I spoke to 2020 graduate and former Head Girl of Sligo Grammar School, Grace O'Sullivan, about what it was like to miss out on so many of the definitive events of their final year.



"It was really hard to miss out on our Valedictory Day. I think everyone looks forward to Valedictory from the day they start at the Grammar School. As a year, I think we all just missed out on the usual things that give students closure at the end secondary school. Without the Debs and Valedictory Service there was no kind of "last day" or celebratory night out". Listening to Grace I was really sympathetic about the whole situation. As a student I know the variety of events, such as Valedictory Day and the Debs is something you look forward to for the whole of your secondary school career.

Another aspect of the whole Covid-19 debacle that I was interested in was the lack of face-to-face contact and support during their long and stressful final term, and how this was very much missed by students. "A lot of us hated that we couldn't thank all the teachers for everything. I think as a year we had a lovely relationship with our teachers and so it was sad to have to just abruptly leave."

A very prevalent issue for the class of 2020 was the way the Leaving Cert. exam was handled by the DES. Were predicted grades the right decision? Did this decision negatively affect some students? I asked Grace for some first-hand clarification. "I definitely can't speak for everyone when it comes to predicted grades. For some it was terrible and for others it worked out fine. I think most of us knew from the moment we were sent home that our Leaving Cert wasn't going to be normal, and I think the worst thing about it all was the uncertainty. There was so much speculation and debate about what could and should happen. It was weird because for the last two years every teacher had drilled into our minds that everything would come down to this three week period in the middle of June and that we had to be prepared for it no matter what, so shifting our mindset from that was definitely strange. So many people in our year were unhappy with predicted grades while others were delighted. I think there was never going to be an outcome where everyone was happy. Even if we sat the real thing not everyone would have been happy."

COVID has affected everyone in so many different ways, though, clearly, some of the effects were more adverse than others. I think we can all empathize with the graduating class of 2020 because of all the missed opportunities with regard to the end of their secondary schooling and the changed Leaving Cert exam. We can appreciate how difficult it has been to adapt to the conclusion of such a big part of their lives during this uncertain and precarious time.







## Extra-Curricular Activities and Sport

As restrictions begin to relax, extra-curricular activities resumed. Hockey, rugby, kayaking, debating, rowing, drama, Christian Union and creative writing all started back the minute the all-clear was given in April, for the first time since Christmas! Hockey players were delighted to receive a new hockey kit after returning from the Easter break. The girls got team jackets, playing jerseys and socks. Thank you to our sponsors TerraChem, O'Connor Moore Dental Practice, Accounting Anytime, O'Grady & O'Neill Solicitors Strokestown, Riverstown TotalHealth, Mr. Bryan Whelan and Lynoslife.

Although extra-curricular sport was kept going throughout the year - when allowed - no competitive matches were played. This was very disappointing for the teams but well done to the boys and girls, not to mention their coaches, who kept on turning up for training despite this. That will surely pay off next year when, we hope, all will return to normal.



## Goodbye and Good Luck

Finally we want to say goodbye to maths teacher Alan Brandon, who is leaving the school after 5 years. Alan taught maths to all year groups and was a valuable member of the SGS Rugby coaching team. He goes to USA to study for a Masters in Accounting. We wish him all the very best of luck in his future. You will be missed!



## SGS TY Magazine Committee



Ms. Hynes' SGS magazine committee worked tirelessly this year in class and over lockdown. Our committee is divided into three main groups, designers, writers and editors. Our talented design team created the cover, interior and outer folder. The majority of our committee is made up of writers, each week writers research, interview and compose their articles which are compiled and submitted to the editors. Some of our writers even take on the important role of photographers. Lastly our editors arrange and adjust all the articles, photos, artwork and designs together to create the SGS mag. We hope you have enjoyed the 2020 - 2021 edition!

**Edited by: Sadhbh Drummond, Mia Clinch and Alannah McAllister**

