

BALLYMACARBRY CENTRAL SCHOOL 2020 - "A YEAR LIKE NONE OTHER"

Prologue: If 2017 would be remembered for Storm Ophelia and its damage to our roof and 2018 for Storm Emma, there is no doubt but that 2020 will be remembered for Covid-19 and the School's closure. As a result, our activities were seriously curtailed with only 2/3 of the school year completed. We missed the busiest term and the most enjoyable one too.

Staff Changes: As with previous years, there are many changes to report. Firstly we welcome Mr Paul Brunnock to our staff as 6th Class teacher, Miss Sarah Blain as 3rd Class teacher and also congratulating her on the birth of a baby during the year. We welcome back Mr Seán McGrath to 5th Class. Mrs Michelle McGrath also gave birth to a baby boy in November and we too congratulate her and her husband Seán on the birth of Mossie. Miss Niamh Walsh was appointed as Michelle's replacement in Rang 4, while Miss Coleman has been with us in a temporary capacity to deputise for Miss Blain until February 2021. We said farewell to Miss Denmead who worked in our Special Education Team during periods of 2020. During the summer we also welcomed Mrs Kay Ware to our staff as SNA and last but by no means least we said farewell to our esteemed colleague Catherine Ryan on her retirement, more about this anon. We also said farewell to 32 Rang 6 pupils and welcomed 19 junior infants in their place.

Welcome: In addition to school personnel, we also welcome Fr. Michael Toomey PP and Garda O'Callaghan. Fr. Michael replaces Fr. Garrett Desmond who has been appointed parish priest to Touraneena and the Nire and Garda Fergal replaces Garda Phil Dee who has been appointed Sergeant in Clonmel. We wish both men well in their new roles within our community and will assist them in any way we can. Can we also extend a warm welcome to Mrs Edel Ahearn on her appointment as Principal at Touraneena N.S. We wish her predecessor Thomas Cronin well in his new role also.

Retirement: Friday 6th November was momentous in that it represented the last day at school for Mrs Ryan. Catherine had given over 22 years of service to the school since joining in late '98. She taught in all settings bar the senior classes and was D.P. and head of Special Education since autumn 2012. Presentations were made on behalf of the Board and the staff on the afternoon and Mrs Kelly & friends provided the music on the occasion. Catherine presented the principal with a unique piece of pottery with the school motto emblazoned on it. "Ní neart go cur le chéile." We wish Catherine many happy years of retirement and thank her for her sterling service. She will be missed by staff and pupils. We also extend our thanks to Miss Fenton who stepped down in August last. Caitriona was first appointed here in early 2006 and left for the southern hemisphere in 2013 where she has been since.

Deaths: Eileen McCarthy was a past member of staff and taught at our school from its opening in 1972 until 1998. Previous to this Eileen also taught at the Nire School from 1958 and was principal for a period prior to its closure. We acknowledge Eileen's enormous contribution to primary education in the Nire and greater Ballymacarbry area for four decades. She will be missed by all those who knew her as Mrs. McCarthy including colleagues on the current staff and past members. Not only will I remember her as a teacher but also as someone who brought us to and from school. Eileen had a love for her native language having been born and reared in the West Cork Gaeltacht, and all things within the community, being prominent within the ICA, Over 55 Club and Whist card players. She loved following the local GAA scene and the exploits of her grandchildren and grandson Jamie with the Deise hurlers. She was a calm, reassuring and measured person full of knowledge and sound advice. Eileen took ill in Dec. 2018 and spent over a year under the care of the staff at Dungarvan Comm. Hospital where she died in July 2020.

Miss O'Brien also died this year. Catherine taught in Newtown from the early 1960's until retirement here in 2002, the longest serving teacher at the new school. Catherine had an avid love of nature and farming and had a deep rooted faith. She had a special devotion to our Lady, St. John Bosco and St. Catherine Labouré. It is fitting that she died on her Feast Day.

Catherine gave time in the missions and promoted helping those in Third World countries during her time at Ballymacarbry N.S. Memories of the Far East magazine, mission boxes and used stamp collections are all clear. She brought the school into the new millennium in that she deputised as principal from 1999 until 2002 and also served as deputy principal.

She always maintained an interest in the people of this area and was a frequent visitor while she could. There was no such thing as a short chat. All who were taught by "small" Miss O'Brien will remember their time with her. Even though small, she had a larger than life presence that will live long around.

Coincidentally, the last time she was here, was to form a guard of honour for her colleague, Eileen as the cortege passed the school gate in July. She is now part of heaven's teaching staff along with her colleagues from Ballymacarbry N.S. who predeceased her. Níl imithe uainn atá siad, ach imithe romhainn. Ar dheis Dé go raibh siad.

We also mourn the passing of Fr. Kelleher. Fr. Connie was parish priest here during the 90's before returning to the Nire. He was also a member of the Board during his time. We had strong links with him in the school and especially at sacramental preparation time. We found him very easy to work with and in tune with the pupils and his parishioners, one of God's true and faithful servants.

Condolences also to Yvonne Ahearne and family, Deerpark View on the untimely death of her husband Noel in May. Noel was father to Jessie in Senior Infants also to the Sheehan, family Kilkeany on the tragic death of Eoin, in mid March, a past pupil of ours.

Sacraments: The initial proposal was that our confirmations would take place in May 2020 but following Covid restrictions the topic had to be reviewed. Luckily a window of opportunity presented itself in August and the departing 6th class were prioritised. Over three Saturdays in the month, Fr Desmond confirmed our Nire candidates, followed by our Fourmilewater boys and then our Fourmilewater girls. Even though basic and simplistic, they were pure and meaningful. Thanks to all who made this possible including Mrs Byrne and staff, photographer Michael Doocey, Parish /School liaison contact Martha Blanchfield and local sacristans Brendan & Nora. As it stands Fr Michael and Fr. Garrett are planning on re-scheduling the remaining confirmation ceremonies for the New Year. October proved too ambitious at the time. Hopefully this will bring us back to a two year cycle from '22.

Similarly, another window was found for our Holy Communion to be conducted in September and again over three Saturdays, Fr Desmond administered the ceremonies at both St. Helena's and St. Laurence's. (Photos filed elsewhere in the Newsletter.) Again thanks to Mrs Coffey and Miss Coleman for assistance here. Along with Fr Desmond, we thank local sacristans and photographer Michael Doocey. It is planned that Communion will take place in the Nire on Sun. 9th May in the Nire and Sat. 15th May at FMW. We had the Diocesan Religious Team of Fr. Richard O'Halloran and Sr. de Lourdes visit our school in March and they reported favourably to BOM Chair Fr. Desmond.

The Arts: Albeit a shortened year, we did manage to stage some events. The Parents' Association assisted Pat Melody & Jim Ryan host Bailegangáire by Brideview Players at the Community Centre in February to garner much appreciated funds for the

school and the local Tidy Towns. Also in February we welcomed Wilde Shamrock Theatre Group to stage the historical story of Setanta / Cú Chulainn in our school Hall. Our Banna Ceoil has been severely restricted since but let's hope 2021 will be a better year for the arts.

Also in February and during Catholic School's Week we held Grandparents' Day. This involved grandparents attending a mass at FMW and returning to school for refreshments. This was very well attended and greatly enjoyed by one and all.

While we missed out on all school tours, Active Week and Sports Day to name but a few, we did partake in the Food Dudes Programme and Mr. McGrath's 5th class lead the way in attaining our Science and Maths Excellence Award. We also had success at the Credit Union Quiz in the U-11 Category.

Sport: Sport was practically nonexistent due to timing of the virus. But we did have Barry from Active Sports Coaching in with our pupils in Jan/Feb as part of a joint venture between the school, Nire Football, Fourmilewater Hurling and Ballymacarbry Ladies Football Clubs. All school competitions were cancelled in 2020. Thanks to Ronan Ryan and FMW Hurling Club for presenting us with sliotars and facemasks recently. Best wishes to club players Jamie, Conor and panellists Shane and Tom in the "Big Match."

Graduation: We deployed our thinking caps in preparing for graduation. By holding off until late June we avoided the popular virtual effort but staged a socially distanced event outside the Centre. We surprised the children by showing messages of support from famous people both of Irish and international renown. Stars such as the two Johnnies, Niall Quinn, Gordon D'Arcy, author Judi Curtin and to top the bill Mark Wahlberg of Hollywood. He personalised his message in holding up a photo of the then 6th class and this made media attention both near and far attracting almost 11,000 hits on the school's facebook page. Well done to all for making it the "best ever." Staff also filmed messages of support and a photo-story of memories of their time in primary school was compiled and shown by the class teacher. Each child was presented with a Certificate of Completion and more importantly a "goodie bag" of sweets donated by the Parents Association. It was a really enjoyable evening. Kids got to meet up and not just see each other on zoom as was the case.

Enrolment: Applications are open at present. It will close in February. All schools are now bound by a new Admissions Policy. Those interested in their child /children attending our school should contact Rose at (052) 6136349 or via ballymacns@gmail.com to request a form. You can also download it from our new website ballymacns.com and forward to us. This service has been made all the more easy with our new hi-speed broadband service in operation.

Epilogue: Much work was done to ensure that children weren't forgotten during the lockdown but more was done to ensure that schooling could continue from 1st September. It is our preferred option to have school open. Let's hope that this continues. Thanks to all who make our school what it is, not merely teaching staff, but ancillary and support staff and extending out into the wider community. A special thanks to Fr. Desmond, Melissa Meehan and all the members of the BOM and also Aoife Fenlon, Therese O'Flynn and other members of the P.A. All that remains for me to do is extend a happy, holy and prosperous Christmas to all associated with Ballymacarbry NS. We hope to meet you all again on Wed 6th Jan 20 in the hope that the "cockstep" evident at that time will bring renewed hope for a better year ahead. "This too shall pass" is a worthwhile mantra to adopt now. Nollaig beannaithe agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh.

Michael J. O'Ryan - Priomh Oide.



6th Class boys FMW



6th Class girls FMW



6th Class Nire



FMW Holy Communion 2020



Nire Holy Communion 2020