

**Prologue:** I stated in last year's edition that 2020 was a year like no other – well I was wrong and 2021 was much of the same. January saw us reengage with Remote Teaching & Learning. Our Covid Response Plan was modified and we were allowed return in March, a year after initial lockdown. Bubbles and Pods were to continue as were increased separation and physical distancing. We did have a run of Covid cases lately but as I write we have reached the peak and some are already returning to school.

**Pupils:** We said farewell to 28 pupils from Rg 6 but in their place we welcomed 21 junior infants. Both our Graduation Night and Open Evenings were held through Zoom. It was a first for graduation and even though families were unable to attend it was memorable and a fitting send off for them.

**Staffing:** We welcomed Ms Blain in September along with Mrs McGrath and Miss Denmead but said farewell to Mr McGrath, Miss Walsh and Miss Coleman. We congratulate Mr Earley who has been appointed as principal to Moyglass N.S. recently. We thank him and wish him well in management. Congratulations also to Miss Dunlea who got married and Ms Blain who had a baby in 2021. We thank Fr Desmond for his term as Chairperson and welcome Mrs. Eileen Condon, Clashavaugha as his successor.

**Sympathy:** We remember Dean Harty of FMW/Dungarvan who graduated from here in 2011. Deirdre O'Ryan – McCarthy who also was a past pupil and indeed worked here. Maureen Wall of Knocknaree who will be fondly remembered as a bus driver. We remember Mr Brunnock's Mum, Maura, who died in October and Dinny McGrath, who died at the ripe old age of 100. Dinny had a family connection to this school since 1972. Ar dheis Dé go raibh siad.

**Ethos:** With all the false dawns in preparing for the sacraments, they eventually took place in September with the help of Bishop Cullinan, Fr Toomey and Fr. Desmond. The Nire pupils were confirmed in Touraneena on Sat 11th and Rg 3 received Holy Communion a fortnight later at St Helena's Church. Their FMW colleagues were confirmed on Sun 19th and Rg 3 received the Eucharist on Sun 26th. It was a very busy month for the local priests, but also Mrs Coffey and Mr Brunnock as class teachers. A special word of thanks to Brendan and Nora, our sacristans. We are told that arrangements for '22 will be announced in the New Year. Fr Toomey celebrated a Start of Year Mass in September and also offered an online mass to mark Grandparents' Day in January.

**Publicity:** We did receive publicity in the media during the year. Miss Coleman and Rg 3 featured on RTE's News Today on St. Valentine's Day. Gavin Flynn gave a 'shout out' to Rg 2 colleagues on 2FM last spring and Olivia Prendergast collected a prize from Boston Scientific, Clonmel involving Science. Lucy Condon Rg 6 won a competition with the Loreto School and Cara Ryan also Rg 6 collected two gold medals in the National Athletic Finals in Tullamore and is the current holder of the High Jump record.

**Fundraisers:** We fundraised this year for past pupil, Naomi Mulcahy, Knockmeal who recovered from brain injury. We presented her with a cheque of €500. Last Christmas we assisted the Lions Club to the tune of €345, to distribute food hampers in West Waterford. Our families also recently prepared 100 Christmas shoeboxes for Eastern European children. Therese O'Flynn held a fundraiser during the year which involved a local sponsored walk. We received €500 as a beneficiary of the event. A Go Fund Me page has been set up for our pupil, Danny Norris. Danny has been diagnosed with Stage 4 high risk Neuroblastoma and while receiving chemotherapy and radiotherapy in Crumlin,

Danny will need overseas treatment in time. There is a target of €380,000 to access this. Donations are flooding in and can be made by accessing the following link <https://gofund.me/7dc2ce7f> Mrs McGrath and her Rg 5 compiled treats for the Late Late Toy Show night and raised €2,085 while Ms Dunlea and Danny's classmates are holding a raffle where a PS 5 can be won on 31st Jan. Follow our Facebook page for more details. We wish Danny well in his treatment and also his family, Lisa, Lar, Charlie and Shay.

**Board of Management:** We are working with Waterford City & County Council and past pupil Noel Flynn (Engr) in a fresh effort to improve parking at school. Families are approaching us with a desire to enrol their children but cannot attain local childcare. To this end the BOM is discussing feasibility options in relation to before and after school childcare.

**Minor Works:** Covid monies have allowed us to undertake significant work. Following on from installing hot water in classes, we had fire doors installed in all rooms. We also had an intercom system deployed internally and externally. This system incorporates bell times and will be of huge benefit post Covid. Furthermore, a film to prevent strong sunlight and heat was attached externally to the south facing rooms. We are already planning for next year in the hope that minor works funding will continue. The DES has been very good to school during Covid. This fact needs acknowledging and we do so here.

**Website & Social Media:** Our school website is fully operational and is by now a store of essential information including up to date weekly emails. We also have our Facebook page which is regularly updated with current information and photographs.

**Enrolment:** Our enrolment process is open and parents have been registering interest. Please pass on this information to those concerned. It is important they do so as soon as possible. All information is available on our website.

**Hope:** We have had some return to normality. Barry Dunne our GAA coach returned as has Ray Power our photographer to capture family photos. Our Parent Teacher Meetings took place - albeit in a non face to face context. Our school tours took our junior side to Parsons Green, while our seniors settled for more local points of interest including the customary excursion to the lakes for our departing class of 2021. In 2022 we hope to plan for our Golden Jubilee in Sept. We also plan to liaise with the Comeragh Upland Forum in promoting the Comeraghs, but the areas most in need of returning, would be sport and the arts. Congratulations to the Nire, Fourmilewater and Ballymacarbry Ladies on their sporting achievements this year. Maith sibh! We thank them for calling to our school in November.

**Epilogue:** Covid has made us take stock of our practices. Hopefully, we can operate more effectively and efficiently into the future ensuring our core values are cemented and reinforced. I know that as I write, Aoife and Therese are busy liaising with Santa's Grotto in the hope that he and his elves will visit us. We wish our entire school community a happy and a holy Christmas; our pupils, teaching staff, board members, SNA's, secretary, cleaners, caretaker, supervisor, Parents' Association, parents and grandparents, bus drivers, Substitutes, TP / Work Experience students, local clergy and sacristans, coaches and musicians (including Barry Dunne and Niamh Meehan). Nollaig beannaithe agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh. Michael J. O'Ryan - Priomhoide.