

It was wonderful to enjoy a full school year once more after the disruptions caused by the pandemic in the previous two. The major target of the school year was trying to restore the normality of yesteryear in order to promote the wellbeing of pupils. The Board of Management still had to follow guidance given by the Department of Education in line with public health advice. The previous year's Covid-19 Response Plan was updated and implemented, but as the year progressed, most of the restrictions imposed were eased and the children could look forward to football matches, tutors, mixed sports' day and closer interactions while in the school building and yard. We recognise, of course, that it wasn't an easy year for those who were still contracting Covid and our prayers and thoughts are with those who continue to be affected by this dreadful infection.

The continued restrictions meant that a Christmas Concert was an impossibility, something which will be rectified in December 2022. Louise and Carmel Maxwell succeeded in bringing a lot of joy into the school by voluntarily preparing elaborate and tasty treats for the children of the school. It was so kind of them and all were especially grateful.

A video is posted on Youtube about the activities conducted in both the Dolmen Centre and St. Conal's NS during Science Week in November 2021. The senior classes were asked to assist the STEAM Silver Science Programme pilot programme funded by Science Foundation Ireland, which was aimed at bringing science to both the older and younger generations in a community. The participation of the pupils with the Rosbeg and Downstrands Care of the Aged group was a wonderful linkup and the only downside was the impossibility at that time because of Covid of actually meeting and working with the adults there. The ingenuity of the instructor, Sinéad McGleenon, allowed the initiative to go ahead and complete its various goals. The video-link is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4r8jDIKIBw>

We are all very proud of Iona McHugh from sixth class in St. Conal's National School on being selected as one of the county winners in this year's "Someone Like Me Art Competition" in February 2022. Nicholas Breslin entered the class in this competition, which focused on disability in its many forms. With nearly 2,000 submissions received and such a high calibre of entries ranging from posters to sculptures and everything in between, it was a huge accomplishment for Iona. To have a winner, considering so many entered nationwide, was a great achievement by Iona and a tribute to the encouragement of her teacher, Mr. Breslin. The National Disability Authority's awards ceremony was presented online, and we were thrilled to see Iona win the County Donegal prize and have her creation showcased. The prize won by the school by virtue of Iona's success allowed us to purchase a set of basketballs.

Another award-winning pupil was Cian Shovlin who was the runner-up in the "Primary School Road Safety Art Competition", organised by Donegal Road Safety Working Group and Finn Harps F.C. The Road Safety Art competition invites young artists from Donegal's Primary Schools to create a piece of visual art that raises awareness of how to stay safe on the roads. The theme of the competition this year was "Travelling to School Safely". Coming so soon after Iona McHugh's artistic success, this was a very successful term for Mr. Breslin's pupils. The presentation itself in the school was a lovely occasion, and Cian was chuffed with his box of copious art supplies and other prizes.

Our teams played valiantly in the Cumann na mBunscol GAA blitz in Glenties, the first time a tournament had been played since 2019. Scoil Mhuire came out on top in both the girls' and

boys' tournament. We thank Brian Moore most sincerely for sponsoring ice-creams for all the squad and helpers afterwards. It was indeed a lovely gesture.

Paddy Hegarty was able to resume GAA training during the year, while Bernie Gallagher coached basketball and computing. The ever-faithful Sara Laughlin was always on hand for a myriad of occasions and the return of our talented tutors was a welcome return to pre-Covid normality.

We marked Autism Awareness in April. Blue is the colour associated with Autism Awareness and the children wore something blue on what was also a Crazy Hair and No Uniform Day. The school also participated in the Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal and 42 boxes were donated. March 21st saw us participate in the "Rock your Socks Day" to mark World Down Syndrome Day. The children were encouraged to wear socks of any combination or colour. Alas, the principal's choice of socks was sartorially questionable!

The Sharpe family donated €815 to St. Conal's N.S., the proceeds of donations collected at their illuminated cottage over Christmas. We were overwhelmed by this act of generosity and it was truly appreciated. This donation funded both a visiting art exploration and ice-cream treat for all the children in June. This family has been helping the children keep the St. Bridget's Crosses tradition alive and well in the school for several decades, and it is wonderful that the children leave the school able to pass this craft on to their own children one day.

We planted two edible apple trees in June, a thank-you gift to the school by Anthony and Teresa Sweeney and family. We look forward to a bumper crop in years to come and we appreciate this gesture by the Sweeney family.

Paul Murray came in to the senior room to conduct an interesting local and international history presentation with the senior pupils and we thank him for taking the trouble to do so. He also presented a signed copy of his recent book, "From the Gaeltacht to Galicia, A Son's Tale" to the school. It's a fascinating read and well worth purchasing. A follow-up programme was broadcast on the B.B.C. earlier this month.

The first to sixth classes went on school tour to Rockhill Activity Park and it was a joyous occasion. The weather cooperated and everyone got into the spirit of participation. The infants also had a trip away, visiting the Dolmen Centre where fun activities and drama were enjoyed.

The senior and middle classes visited Portnoo Market Garden after Easter and we are especially grateful to Barrie Quinn for his time, courtesy and the expertise he shared. A lot of thoughtful pupils returned from those trips and "seeds" were no doubt planted in their minds regarding working better with the environment and looking after our health.

The children in the senior room were able to host a Bring and Buy Sale in the school hall for the first time in three years. This was an annual showpiece for many years before Covid and it was wonderful to see it back on the roster. The senior pupils organised stalls and sold small items like toys or books, finger food/bakery items, popcorn, soft drinks, etc. that they thought might be desired by their customers: their fellow pupils. We saw the entrepreneurial and mathematical skills of the pupils on display, and it was also a great social occasion. And when it was over, many conscientious pupils volunteered to stay behind to clear up the hall

and leave it ready for work next day; this was something that I and the cleaners greatly appreciated. I wish to pay tribute to the excellent behaviour and good humour of all the pupils that day, and I thank all the adults who assisted in any way. The sum of €551 was raised, which went towards extra resources divided among the classrooms and special education rooms.

The second class received their First Holy Communion from Fr. Daly in May. The preparatory programme had been conscientiously followed by parents and pupils in the previous months at several Masses and the participation of the dedicated children from the older classes in the various choirs was laudable. The children were outstanding and a credit to themselves, their loving parents, the conscientious teacher, the redoubtable S.N.A. and gifted musical coach.

The school applied to the Summer Works Scheme in 2019 seeking the replacement of the 37-year-old heating system in the school. We received word this spring that our application to the Dept. of Education for grant-aid was successful and the exhaustive process of appointing a consultant to oversee the project and a contractor to carry out the work was undertaken. We were very grateful for the substantial grant received, which covered the total cost of the works. Christopher Boyle was the engineering consultant overseeing the project, while Sweeney Plumbing and Heating Contractors from Lettermacaward were awarded the contract following an e-tendering process. The project involved switching over to gas from kerosene, the replacement of all radiators and connecting pipes and the installation of a two new boilers and an outside gas tank. Thermostat-controlled hot and cold water is available in the classrooms for the first time.

Since 2010, the Board has installed extra insulation into the cavity walls and roof-space, replaced all the wooden doors and windows with PVC, painted both interiorly and exteriorly, added playground teaching aids and play equipment, installed modern signage, provided and modified a dry storage container, and together with the recent overhaul of the heating system, provided a comfortable and energy-efficient working environment for our pupils and staff.

Through careful management of our IT grants, we were in a position at Easter to purchase another 10 iPads to add to our existing batch of 16, together with 30 Google Chromebooks. The former are in use in the junior and middle rooms and also in special education, while the Chromebooks are used daily in the senior room throughout the curriculum, helping to provide our pupils with the digital literacy skills so necessary in the modern world.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Fr. Daly on Saturday, March 26th, 2022. Confirmation preparatory Masses were thorough and the children put everything into making the Masses extra special, with each one focusing on a theme such as the Beatitudes, the Mass and the Altar. Megan McConnell was not able to join us on the scheduled date, but she received the Sacrament by herself on Palm Sunday. Her classmates in fifth and sixth offered to dress up in their Confirmation clothes and be with her on the day. It was a lovely gesture of support by her peers and continued evidence of the positive ethos engrained in our school motto of caring for each other. On the day that the sixth class left our school for the last time, they celebrated their togetherness as a unit around a beautifully decorated cake courtesy of Caroline Shovelin. They maintained and enhanced an historic, positive behaviour benchmark in our school for all those who come after them.