



ALL HALLOWS' CAMPUS, DCU. HOME OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND CENTRE

Church of Ireland Centre, DCU

IN THIS ISSUE

It has been a very different semester again for us in DCU. We welcomed 32 first year students, however they are only on campus every second week for one day. We are getting to know them on zoom! Second year students attend PE lectures on campus and all other year groups are learning remotely through asynchronous and synchronous lectures.

Our graduates have not had that wonderful experience of a university graduation ceremony. We held a Church of Ireland Centre zoom event recently, to award them their Religious Education Certificate (Follow Me). A full report is on page 2. This group of students were the first cohort of students to spend their four years on campus in DCU.

Just as in schools, our vocabulary is completely different from this

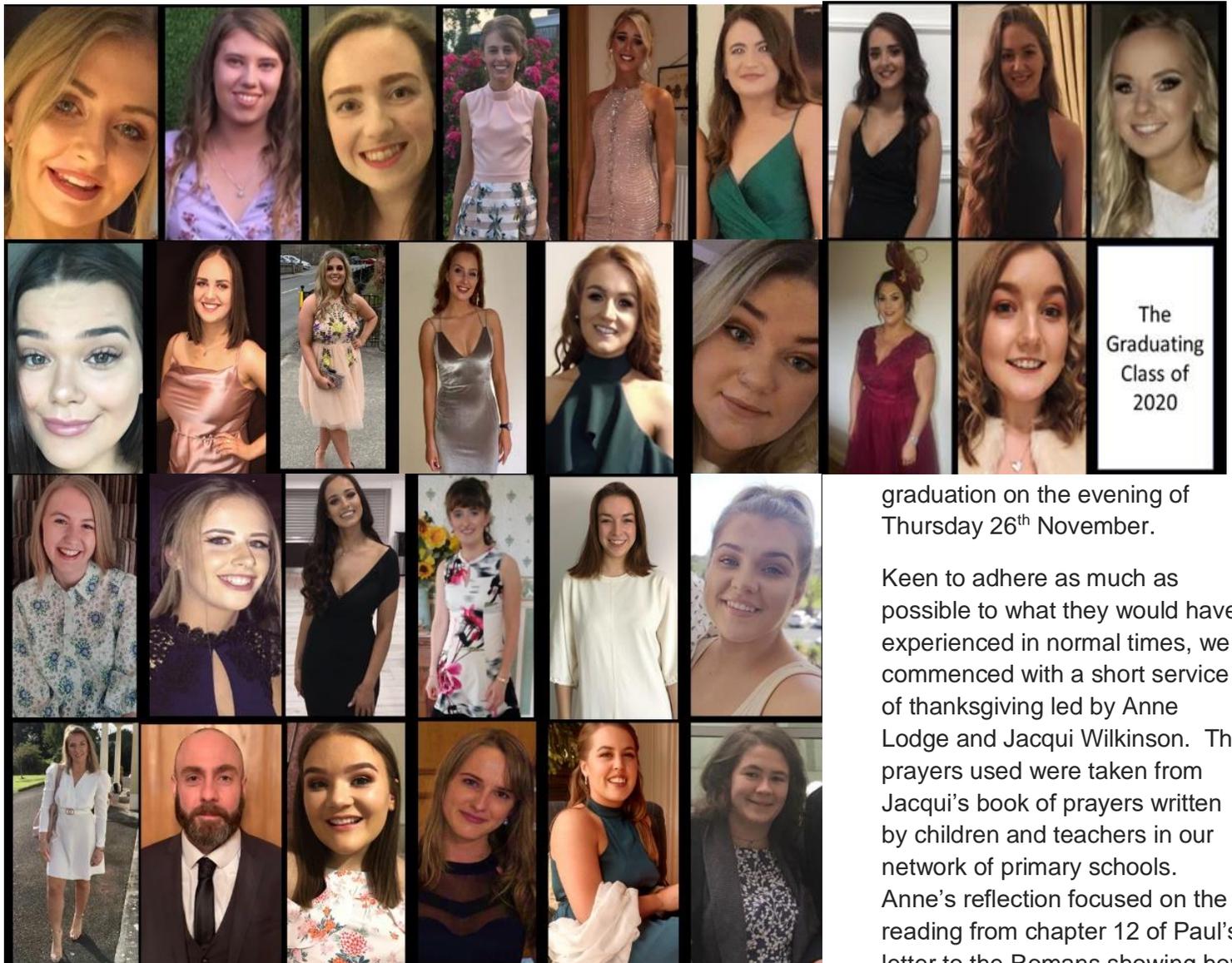
time last year: zoom, synchronous, hybrid teaching, lockdown, social distancing etc. We have found new ways of doing things and maybe we have decluttered some of the unnecessary in our day to day lives.

Enormous thanks to those teachers and schools who contributed articles for this edition. It is so important for us to connect our work in preparing students for their teaching careers, with those teaching day by day in our partner schools. Do please consider writing for this newsletter for our 2021 editions – it is great to share news within our network of schools. We wish you and your schools and families a healthy and happy Advent and Christmas.

*Anne Lodge, Geraldine O'Connor,
Jacqui Wilkinson(Newsletter editor)*

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The Graduating Class of 2020

graduation on the evening of Thursday 26th November.

Keen to adhere as much as possible to what they would have experienced in normal times, we commenced with a short service of thanksgiving led by Anne Lodge and Jacqui Wilkinson. The prayers used were taken from Jacqui's book of prayers written by children and teachers in our network of primary schools. Anne's reflection focused on the reading from chapter 12 of Paul's letter to the Romans showing how teaching is one of the gifts the Spirit. Anne finished her reflection by noting how their 3rd level teachers delighted to see the class of 2020 grow and flourish over the past four years and

hoping that they too will have many years to rejoice in the achievement and development of the children in their care.

We were very grateful to both the archbishops of Armagh and Dublin who also contributed to the zoom graduation. Archbishop McDowell

Graduation 2020

By Rev. Prof. Anne Lodge

So many traditions have had to be revised in 2020 due to COVID.

The Church of Ireland Centre's graduation event for the conferring of the RE Certificates in teaching the Follow Me programme along with its prize-giving event for graduates was just one of those

temporarily amended traditions. For the first time, our graduates had their achievements recognised by zoom rather than in person. All 29 of the class of 2020 attended the special zoom

THE CHURCH OF IRELAND CENTRE, DCU

Graduation for all who completed the RE Certificate in Teaching the Follow Me Programme + CIC Prize-giving

Thursday 26th Nov 2020, 7pm

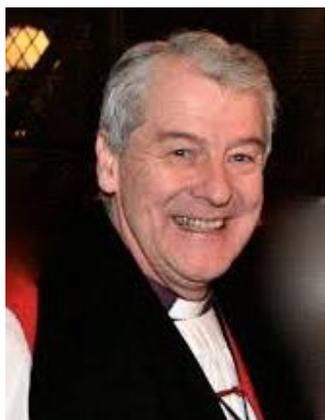
DCU Church of Ireland Centre

- Preparing caring primary teachers
- Serving our schools and children
- Researching and informing communities
- Caring for the CIC's heritage
- Living Anglican ethics



congratulated the graduates not just on their achievement, but also on their resilience in the face of the last very challenging months of their studies and the first months of their work in schools.

Archbishop Jackson reminded the class of 2020 that they are ambassadors out in our network of schools, drawing on their learning in the RE Certificate to support and encourage children's spiritual curiosity.



There were prizes given for excellence in the RE Certificate to Diane Allen, Tara Moffett, Heidi Hosford and Stephanie Jackson. Prizes for excellence in their final year Gaelge went to Lynn Beattie, Stephanie Jackson, Aisling Byrne and Kaitlyn Jay.

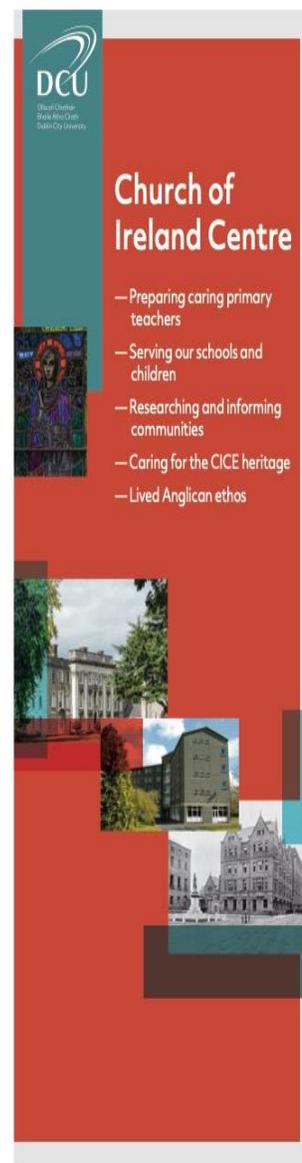
School placement attainment in 4th year prizes went to Diane Allen, Stephanie Bennett, Kelly Cartwright, Hannah McCabe, Tara Moffett, Eve Moody and Louise Newe.

In their final year of the B.Ed programme, students are required to undertake a project where they focus in depth on one of a range of issues. Our students can select any of the topics on offer. We award prizes for projects in those areas that fall within the CIC's remit – namely work on Protestant school ethos, work on excellence in teaching in the multigrade setting and work on inclusive education. This year prizes for the outstanding projects in the CIC areas went to Kelly Cartwright and Victoria Forster for their excellent work in teaching in the multigrade setting. Prizes were awarded to Lynn Beattie, Stephanie Jackson and Aisling Byrne for their high quality work exploring Protestant ethos in primary schools. Kirsty Nolan was awarded a prize for her high quality work in an inclusive education project.

We in the Centre are delighted to congratulate the class of 2020 on their great achievement of completing their degree (especially in the very challenging circumstances of the last three months of their degree) and successfully completing the Religious Education Certificate in teaching the Follow Me programme.

We are also delighted to note that all our 2020 graduates are working in primary schools. The large majority have found jobs in Protestant schools. Some of our 2020 graduates already have permanent teaching positions and many have one-year jobs. We

know that they are in good hands out in our network of schools and we also know that graduates of the Class of 2020 will make very positive contributions to their new workplaces.



School Placement

by Geraldine O'Connor

School Placement in term 1 occurred for BEd 4 and PME2 2 student teachers from the Institute of Education, DCU, and was adapted to take account of the new circumstances within schools. The remainder of school placement is scheduled for next term.

Thank you to all principals and teachers who hosted, facilitated and supported student placement in November in what has been a very challenging time. Thank you also to the schools hosting students next term.

Enabling student teachers to engage in placement in your school supports the continuation of professional learning and development in the school, which is a vital site of professional practice and learning. We would like to sincerely thank the schools which have contacted us offering placements, confirmed placements and to also acknowledge that some schools were unable to do so this year due to the exceptional circumstances. We greatly value our partnership with schools which enables school placement to take place, and in light of the Covid-19 pandemic your support of student teachers is more vital than ever.

It is important that students undertake school placement

safely. To that end, DCU Institute of Education requires all BEd student teachers doing placement this year to complete a certified *COVID-19 Induction Training* prior to their commencement of placement. This programme enables students to be informed and to become aware of how they should take all reasonable care to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the school and how to follow wellbeing and curriculum guidelines for schools. Students are also expected to adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined for their particular school setting so that they, along with all school staff, can protect health and safety as far as possible within the school.

Due to a directive from the DES, school placement tutor visits to students in schools did not take place in the first term. Instead, student teachers met their tutors on-line and submitted records of their planning and teaching on a weekly basis. Schools were also invited to make contact with the IOE to discuss any SP issues or to give feedback on their placements, a process that would normally occur when a tutor visits a school.

Students received much support and direction at school level. They have learned much about adapting teaching and learning to ensure that physical distancing and safety is adhered to and they explored ways to best support their pupils' learning and wellbeing in a time of certain restrictions around pedagogy and resource use. Students, though

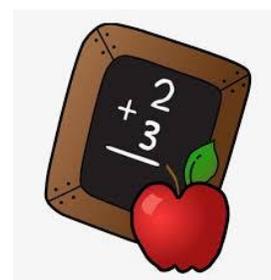
somewhat apprehensive prior to placement in these changing times, have been hugely positive about their experiences to date. Many schools have also given us some very appreciative feedback. We hope this will continue to be so next semester.

We will be in contact with you further about the direction we receive about how placement tutors will interact with student teachers on placement next term.

You can of course contact the IOE school placement office or myself as placement director within the Church of Ireland Centre should you wish to discuss a placement issue. (It is best to do so by email as a first means of contact). Thank you once again for your support of school placement to date both pre-Covid-19 and at the current time. It is greatly appreciated.

Schools with any placement queries can contact the *Director of School Placement* at the Church of Ireland Centre, DCU.

geraldine.oconnor@dcu.ie



Welcome BEd 1 students

In October we welcomed 32 new BEd 1 students, linked with us in the Church of Ireland Centre. These 32 students come from Cavan, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Laois, Leitrim, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Tipperary, Westmeath, Wexford, and Wicklow. We welcomed the BEd 1 students during their first week at a Zoom session. Since then most of our contact with this group has been through zoom lectures.

The journey through college commenced for DCU, Institute of Education BEd 1 students in September 2020 with course delivery during the semester offering a combination of face-to-face lectures, workshops and tutorials as well as online lectures. The on-campus experience every fortnight has given students an opportunity to engage in hands-on and collaborative learning as well as offering some time to meet with peers and lecturers and to experience at first hand aspects of University life.

Jamie Burns, Emily Saunders, Emily Burns, Emily Shaw, Rebecca Lyster and Holly Quinn.



The picture taken on DCU St. Patrick's Campus in a socially distanced way shows some BEd 1 students connected to the Church of Ireland Centre outside the Cregan Library.

On 1st December five of our BEd 2 students met with the BEd 1 group on zoom and answered a range of questions about coursework, placement and DCU societies and activities. Thanks to Alannah, Claudia, Ella, Eoghan and Glenn for helping out with this. It was of great help to the BEd 1 students.

Outdoor Learning Webinar

by Geraldine O'Connor

The recent **Outdoor Learning Webinar** arranged by the Church of Ireland Centre DCU was very well supported by partner schools with over 50 attendees logging in from all over Ireland. Thank you to **Dr. Orla Kelly** based in the School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies, DCU for her wonderful presentation which explored the rationale and benefits of learning in, about and through the outdoors. Orla



presented a range of research and resources which support employing outdoor pedagogy. Commencing with small steps to more progressive experiences in the school grounds or locality was proposed as a method of gradually building confidence in not only the outdoors but also of finding a means of integrating learning and advancing the curriculum outside.

Frequent experiences in the outdoors was shown to support the development of children's positive attitudes and dispositions, learning, achievement, skills use and general wellbeing. Some very sensible approaches to developing pedagogies to encourage explorative learning in the natural and built world around our schools were presented.

The participation of the group who attended this session was very interesting in pointing to challenges and enablers and goal setting. Thank you to all who attended. We hope to schedule a second session on this topic in the new year.

Religious Education

by Jacqui Wilkinson

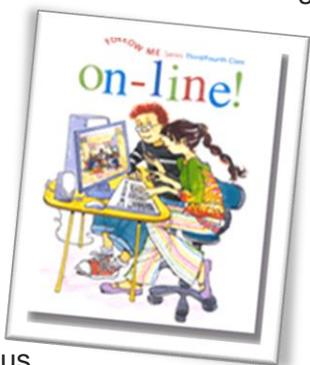
With the current restrictions it has not been possible to run the usual Religious Education Certificate Courses or to offer CPD in schools this term.

The RE Cert course is for practising teachers in protestant primary schools who did not train in CICE or through the BEd DC004 track linked with the Church of Ireland Centre in DCU – so do not have the Follow Me Cert.

With uncertainty as to how travel restrictions will look after Christmas it is planned to run the **RE Cert for 2021** in a 'hybrid' manner – with 5 online zoom sessions and one final face to face on a Saturday towards the end of the school year.

Teachers currently teaching Follow Me or with a minimum of one year classroom experience teaching Follow Me are eligible to complete the course which builds on this necessary experience. Full information has been emailed to schools and do contact me with any questions. The closing date for applications is **15 December 2020**.

CPD sessions can also be offered online so if your school would like to avail of one of the **CPD sessions** offered do make contact. The sessions available



are: Enquiry based learning in the senior classroom, Multi-faith teaching, the Church of Ireland, ICT and RE, assemblies in school, Follow Me methodology, Bible story telling, Prayer in the classroom.

Jacqueline.Wilkinson@dcu.ie



@JWilkinson31

CHRISTMAS CRIB PICTURES

Have you a crib in your classroom or school this month?

Are you making a crib in RE or Art?

If so, please send a photo of the crib along with the school name to Jacqui Wilkinson for an online gallery of Christmas cribs.



Heavenly Father as we get closer to Christmas with all its excitement may we enjoy the special times at home with our families. We also pray for those children for whom this Christmas may be sad or lonely. As we give and receive presents, we pray that we will always remember the true meaning of Christmas - the birth of your son Jesus. Amen. © Praying Together 2020

Dear God help us to remember the real meaning of Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Please help the homeless and less fortunate this Christmas. May everyone have a safe and warm Christmas with family and friends. Give us hope and joy this Christmas. Amen.

Heavenly Father, may this Christmas be a time of sharing, giving, love and happiness. Thank you Lord for this wonderful occasion and for our friends and family. On this occasion please help those who are less fortunate and lonely. Thank you for Christmas, a time that unites all friends and families. Amen

© Praying Together 2020

Applying for the B.Ed. via the Church of Ireland Pathway DC004

by Anne Lodge

Students on the Church of Ireland Centre's pathway study the B.Ed programme along with their classmates in DCU. Certain elements of the programme are unique to them.

- The CIC students do the majority of their School Placements in Protestant primary schools.
- They study the RE Cert to prepare to teach the *Follow Me* religious education programme used in Protestant primary schools and learn about the ethos of those schools.
- They take modules that study Christianity from a reformed perspective, look at world faiths, explore social and moral issues, and study the RE programmes and cultures of all types of Irish primary schools.
- They follow the specialism to prepare them to teach in small schools and multi-level classes. The aptitudes learned in this specialism benefit all those studying to be primary teachers. There are five modules in this specialism:

- teaching in multi-level classes
- inclusive classrooms
- early years teaching
- project-based learning in the classroom and the school
- teaching and leading in small schools

APPLICATION:

Application is made via the CAO. Applicants need to include DC004 in their CAO choices by 1st February on the year of entry in order to be considered for eligibility.

ELIGIBILITY:

Students on this pathway need to demonstrate a knowledge of, and willingness to support, the Protestant ethos of these primary schools. Such knowledge and connection can include attendance at primary or post-primary schools under Protestant patronage, active engagement in a range of social and other clubs and activities (e.g. GFS, BB, GB, Church youth club). It can also include engagement with a parish or church or religious network in any of the Protestant traditions. Eligibility is assessed by a separate application form sent out from DCU in the Spring. References will be sought to assess eligibility.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

There are a maximum of 32 students per year given places in this stream in 1st year. The published points vary from year to year due to the small number of places on offer. This means it is impossible to pinpoint accurately from year to year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE APPLICATION PROCESS CHECK THE DCU PROSPECTUS ONLINE.

https://www.dcu.ie/courses/undergraduate/institute_of_education/bachelor-education-restricted-entry.shtml

and keep an eye on the CIC website for updates

<https://www.dcu.ie/church-of-ireland-centre/Applying-for-BEd-Church-of-Ireland-Centre-pathway-DC004.shtml>

Anne Lodge recorded a presentation on the DC004 pathway into the BEd for DCU Open Day in November. This is available on request to her.

anne.lodge@dcu.ie

Have you a school story to share in our next Newsletter which is sent to all schools linked to the Church of Ireland Centre, DCU? Contact Jacqui

jacqueline.wilkinson@dcu.ie

IPPN and Small Schools

by Anne Lodge

Anne Lodge was delighted to be asked to contribute to the IPPN's special issue on Small Schools which was published in November 2020. She wrote an article about the small schools research she undertook with her late colleague David Tuohy in 2016 that emphasised the positive aspects of small schools from the points of view of teachers, principals, parents and learner while not ignoring the burden of work experienced by teaching principals in particular.



Dr. Ken Fennelly of the General Synod Board of Education also contributed an article on school governance in the small school sector.

Sarah Richards, principal of Whitechurch NS, wrote an article based on a talk she had given to 4th year B.Eds in Nov 2019, about leading a small and growing school, focusing on how to retain the sense of family as the school community gets larger. Well done Sarah on a great article

Conference News

Anne Lodge gave two papers at the Annual Conference of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland in early September 2020. Like so much else, the conference had been delayed from its usual Spring timing and then held online. Anne's first paper was on an updating of the Small Schools research conducted with David Tuohy and published in 2016. This paper examined the changing nature of State policy regarding small schools and the dawning recognition of the value of small schools serving local areas for the promotion of a policy of sustainability in line with responses to climate change.

Anne's second paper, delivered with two DCU colleagues, was on research they conducted on the Relationships and Sexuality programme at 2nd level. Anne is currently the General Synod Board of Education's representative on the NCCA's curriculum development group which is working on updating the RSE programme.

In October 2020, Jacqui Wilkinson delivered two papers on her recent research on Primary School Children and Prayer to the Irish Institute for Catholic Studies and to a symposium of the Postgraduate Learning Community based in Liverpool Cathedral.

Congratulations

To: the pupils of Ballymore NS, Dunfanaghy.



The children wanted to thank the frontline workers, that kept their community safe and well during the pandemic, by planting and delivering personalised pot plants. The children gave up their free time, throughout September, in order to ensure that each frontline worker received a thank you gift.

They delivered pot plants to the Churches, the Gardaí, the local pharmacy, local grocery shops, nursing unit, Health Care Centre etc.

This act of kindness led to the children receiving a volunteer recognition award (with prizes valued at €500!) from the Donegal Volunteer Centre.

This term in school: voices from schools

by Linda McMahon

Taunagh N.S. is a two-teacher school located in the picturesque village of Riverstown, Co. Sligo. Re-opening our doors after the school closure required a significant team effort to ensure we could implement the COVID-19 Response Plan on time. Waiting on direction from the Department of Education meant that the summer of 2020 was one of refreshing state websites and checking emails, culminating in a race to order PPE and cleaning products. Marie Kondo would be very proud of our decluttering in a bid to make space and allow for ease of cleaning. We now have a renewed appreciation for our selection of outdoor sheds as they were an ideal solution to store those items which still spark joy but are not COVID friendly.

We re-opened on Wednesday, 26th August with the school looking very well and adorned

with an array of yellow posters with all our reminders. Adopting the new routines has highlighted a number of advantageous practices. Insisting on washing hands before eating is required now but seems to be something which we should have always done. Staggering drop-offs and collection times reduces the rush in the mornings and afternoons. Assigning specific areas for pupils to have their own belongings and allocating resources which they use in advance enhances classroom management and organisation.

The most beneficial aspect of all the changes, however, has been the return to quality teaching and learning, free from outside distractions. With no trips to the swimming pool or the nearby theatre or Christmas sale to organise, we have uncovered something which has been missing from the school day for quite a while – time. Time to think, time to discuss, time to complete projects and undertake new ones. I think we will all agree

every week is a special week in school with lots of different weeks to celebrate something different. Now I feel that it is not just a matter of fitting in Space Week, Maths Week and Science Week, to name but a few; we actually look forward to these weeks and do them justice.

2020 will certainly be remembered as the year where we embraced the need for staff and pupils to become twenty-first century learners. The school closure saw us recreate the landscape of teaching and learning with digital



tools. Now that we are back in school, it is essential to maintain and develop these skills. Homework has been reimaged and we now have Digital Thursdays where the pupils complete tasks online. Video conferencing tools allow us to participate in workshops and assemblies. In one regard, we have closed our doors to keep COVID-19 out and in another, we have opened our doors to new possibilities.



that

This term in school: voices from schools

by Sandra Moloney

In 2020 we celebrate the 300th Anniversary of Castleknock National School. It certainly has proved to be a year to remember – not, however, in the ways had planned! The unexpected closure in March meant that so many of our plans, including a Presidential visit had to be postponed. After a difficult few months and the introduction of remote learning we ended our school year at the end of June with a 'Drive-in Graduation' for 6th Class.



After a summer spent moving furniture and measuring to allow for pods and social distancing we re-opened to the great relief of all at the end of August. Despite the challenges of constant hand-sanitising, social distancing and all the uncertainty about the new systems, all the children were so happy to be back in school with their friends and some structure and routine. This has truly shown us all how important school is in the life of every child!

School is a changed place these days. Parents are required to wear face-coverings when on school grounds and they are asked to stay out of the building. Our classes are separated at all



times and playtime is staggered. The buddy system which means so much to our children has been put to one side for now. Being together has had to take on a new meaning. As in so many schools, the weekly assembly, where we come together to

celebrate all the small triumphs of school life – the awards for Gaeilge and Merit, the successes in competitions, music exams and sporting events, the Birthdays – all are now something we come together via Zoom to enjoy 'being together whilst staying apart!' Our aim is to do as many of the usual things albeit in a 'new' way. We have had 'virtual tours' of Dublin Zoo and a number of workshops from our local arts centre 'An Draíocht' via zoom also.

Technology has been an absolute necessity! We are keeping busy and we have welcomed RTE News2day to our school to celebrate 'Tree Day' and to launch a book of poetry 'Irish Food A-Z' written by an Aunt of some of our pupils to support the science curriculum. We update our website weekly to allow parents 'see' all the wonderful things the staff are doing in class –we have

also put together a number of short videos to celebrate events – it was our way of 'sharing' our dress-up at Halloween. We have plans for something special at Christmas – our Christmas Plays and Carol Service may wait until next year.

We are all expert cleaners here, who knew? We are all working so hard to take care of each other and support everyone around us.



The greatest challenge, so far, has been keeping staff in every classroom – my thanks to the students from DCU for stepping up to help us out on a number of days! (A chance to see life on the front line! We have been so fortunate to have your

youthful, enthusiastic help!)

The most important thing, a teacher needs to be is adaptable – we need to plan but also to expect the unexpected! 300 years of CNS in Castleknock. When the school opened all those years ago it was little more than a 'hedge school'. Who would have imagined, that, in celebration, we would be planning to open an 'outdoor classroom'? Something so badly needed as we are required to keep our pupils outdoors as much as possible! We look forward to the rest of term, our slightly altered celebrations for Christmas and the rest of the school year. May we all stay safe and well, 'Back together and staying apart' as we write the next chapter in the life of CNS....

This term in school: voices from schools

by Jill Horan

My name is Jill Horan, and I am delighted to share my short reflection today on 'Leading a primary school through the COVID-19 pandemic'.

Since September 2019, I have been the Teaching Principal of St. Multose National School, which is located in the beautiful town of Kinsale, Co. Cork. Little could I have anticipated in my first year as a School Principal that our country would be in the midst of a public health pandemic for most of 2020. Naturally, in lieu of the circumstances, our 'day-to-day' routines as teachers and school leaders were turned upside down in March 2019, however, our school's resilience has persevered, and we have continued to deliver on our educational commitment to the children of St. Multose National School. For many reasons, our school has upheld its true values of education during COVID-19, but I would like to briefly allude to three underpinning structures that have allowed our school in Kinsale 'survive' the heat.

1. Our Pupils – the pupils of our school have adapted so well to



the challenging circumstances associated with COVID-19. Statements like 'wash your hands', 'stay in your pods/bubbles' and 'use hand sanitiser', have now become, and dare I say, 'the norm'. Without our pupils' adherence to the new school protocol, I honestly don't know how we would manage. Our pupils have been the 'shining stars of the show', displaying bravery, courage and resilience. They are the bedrock of our school and have taught us adults quite a lot since March!

2. Our staff – my colleagues in St. Multose National School are the unspoken heroes of this

pandemic for me. Wearing a face mask from 8.00am onwards for the entire school day is a race, yet, wearing a face mask all day every school day is a marathon. My colleagues and I continue to deliver our daily classes, respecting and upholding the COVID-19 protocols. While we long for the day when we will be able to remove our face masks, for now, my colleagues will remain patient and will continue to do what they do best in teaching and supporting their pupils.

3. Our community - As the proverb goes, "It takes a village to raise a child". Since the inception of the pandemic, the community of Kinsale have been a formidable force in assisting the pupils and staff of our school. Our parents, board of management, local stakeholders, community volunteers and clergy (indeed, the list could go on) have continued to offer their assistance, advice, support and expertise in maintaining our school's heartbeat. While I do not have a 'Cork passport' as a Wexford woman, I certainly feel the community spirit shining through our school's corridors every day.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this short narrative of our school's persistence and survival during COVID-19.



Alone, we can do so little, together, we can do so much (Helen Keller).

Career break: Teaching in Vietnam -

by Ricky McMahon
Whitechurch NS

Last year, I was fortunate to be able to take a career break from teaching in Whitechurch National School to go traveling through South East Asia and to spend some time teaching English in Vietnam. Teaching English in Vietnam was a memorable experience on so many different levels and far exceeded my expectations.



As there is a great demand for learning English in Vietnam, it was relatively easy to find a job. I got a job teaching English with a language centre called APAX. The children would come to these centres twice a week, in the evenings, after their 'normal' school during the day, or over the weekend. Before I started teaching in the centre, I had to complete two weeks of training with APAX and then pass the exams in order to qualify. This was a unique experience, as although I have previous teaching experience, I had to follow APAX's teaching programme and way of teaching English. After I

passed the training, I was placed in one of their centres in the capital, Hanoi.

Hanoi is often described as the Marmite of Asia - you either hate it or love it. For some it's a crowded, crazy, stressful city, and for others it's a crowded, crazy, wonderful city. Thankfully for me it was the latter. Hanoi is culturally and historically rich, it is filled with hidden gems, welcoming people, delicious food and endless adventure. Most teachers who

manage to endure their daunting welcome, live to describe it as a teacher's paradise.

My teaching week was very different to what I was used to in Ireland. I taught from 5pm – 9pm from Tuesday to Sunday, with Monday being my day off. At first, I struggled with teaching late in the evenings. However, after a while I began to enjoy my long mornings and the opportunity to explore the crazy city of Hanoi during the day. If I ever felt tired teaching in the evenings, I had to remind myself that the children I was teaching,

had been in school since 7.30am – 4.30pm, and then in the English centre in the evening for another 2 hours!

In my centre, there were 12 other English teachers, all of whom were native English speakers, mainly from England and South Africa. There were 12 Vietnamese staff who were responsible for the administrative duties in the centre, as well as dealing with the parents. They were all very helpful and a lot of fun. As APAX had a teaching programme for us to follow, it meant that I did not have to do much preparation work each day, however, it did limit the level of freedom and creativity I had in the lessons.

The children were extremely friendly, energetic and grateful. Thankfully, they all had a good level of English, so with a lot of drama, drawings, actions and mime, it was relatively easy to communicate with the children. I think a lot of the pupils I taught developed a small Cork accent by the time I was finished!

Overall, this was an unforgettable experience to immerse myself into a new culture and education system, where I was able to learn different teaching strategies, methods and techniques, which have benefited both my professional and personal development.



First teaching positions: voices of some 2020 graduates

Paul Scanlon

I am currently teaching in St Michael's House Special School, Baldoyle, on a six month maternity leave contract. The school caters for students with severe and profound learning difficulties, offering a broad, varied and child centred curriculum that is focused on the children's abilities and daily life skills needs.



The school, staff and children are amazing and an absolute pleasure to work alongside. I have felt so welcomed since I began in this role which reflects the supportive ethos and sense of community that prevails in St Michael's House.

Working in a Special School as an NQT is proving to be an extremely enjoyable, yet steep, learning curve in terms of my pedagogy, however the training and expert guidance given to me in my time in the Church of Ireland Centre in DCU, especially in the area of Inclusive Education has given me confidence to keep learning and reflecting on my practice.

Moments of challenge have, like many other schools in current circumstances, come about due to

Covid -19 restrictions daily impact on classroom teaching and extra curricular activities. For instance swimming, horse riding, morning assembly, drama productions and interclass collaborations have been ceased. The cleaning of teaching resources and maintaining adequate ventilation is another new obstacle we are all having to navigate through lately.

Nevertheless I am acutely aware of how fortunate and privileged I am to be realizing a lifelong dream of becoming a teacher, and I'm extremely grateful to be on this highly rewarding journey.

Hannah McCabe

After a wonderful 4 years of studying Primary School Teaching in DCU through the COI pathway, I have started my teaching journey with Senior Infants in Kill O' The Grange National School. I was so eager to get started in September, but there were some nerves due to being a newly qualified teacher starting their career in the middle of COVID. The nerves were eased knowing I had amazing support from the Principal Hilary McBain, and all the staff in the school. I was welcomed with open arms and with such a positive, friendly, and encouraging atmosphere.

I couldn't be happier teaching Senior Infants in my first year out. No day is ever the same and

there's not a day in Senior Infants where I don't laugh. It's so heart-warming to see how much the children progress every day. It was challenging in September for teachers and children when schools opened back up as the children missed so much social interaction because of the closure, but after 1 or 2 weeks we got back on track and teaching as if nothing happened at all. It's wonderful getting to use all I learned in college in the classroom! I have also begun my Droichead, I have an amazing PST supporting me throughout my experience. I have learned so much from them already and I'm so excited to see what else they will mentor me on.

One thing I have loved so much is having my own class and classroom. It's so rewarding to



see what you have taught the children and supporting them all in their individual ways. To be honest, I have felt overwhelmed a few times by pushing myself to

do the best I can, but I have not once felt that teaching wasn't for me. I really am having such an incredible and positive experience and there is nothing I would change. I really look forward to the many more years of teaching I have ahead of me.

Kelly Cartwright

Having spent the past four years studying Primary School Teaching in DCU, I am delighted to be teaching 2nd and 3rd class in Drumcondra National School.



As a newly qualified teacher, I was excited to begin my first year of teaching. However, I was also nervous as there were a lot of new safety procedures that would have to be implemented as a result of COVID19. I knew things were going to be very different to what I had envisioned my first year of teaching to be.

The first couple of weeks were difficult as both teachers and pupils adapted to the new classroom routines. Having said that, it was so uplifting to see how excited the children were to be back in school, seeing their friends and having a new teacher. I found their excitement and positivity to be very encouraging and motivating for me as their teacher.

Teaching in a small school setting like Drumcondra NS, you would expect to quickly become familiar with all the students in the school. However, due to Covid this was made more difficult due to being unable to have whole school assemblies and having staggered

break times. Instead, we have a weekly virtual assembly via zoom which allows us to connect with each other.

As a NQT there was not only a need to be able to teach in the classroom but also to

teach remotely if necessary. A lot of time was spent educating myself and the students on how to use google classroom. This took some getting used to but it is now another excellent resource to have for class and home use.

I am currently undergoing the Droichead process and I have felt extremely supported by the helpful staff in Drumcondra National School. I am learning everyday and I am thoroughly enjoying my first year teaching in 2nd and 3rd class. I am delighted to finally have my own classroom and class to watch grow, learn and develop with me as their teacher.

This Newsletter will be issued each school term. We hope it will keep our network of schools up to date with the work based in the Church of Ireland Centre , DCU.

Do remember to check our website for updates, like us on facebook and follow us on twitter for up to date news.

<https://www.dcu.ie/church-of-ireland-centre/index.shtml>

We would love to feature stories from our graduates about their teaching experiences as NQTs and from those who have had experiences teaching in other parts of the world. Do share your stories
jacqueline.wilkinson@dcu.ie