

# PANDEMIC!!

## An Opportunity or a Misery?

The duration of the lockdown from the beginning of March 2020 until recently has taken a great toll on students and teachers alike by forcing us to adapt and work within the constraints of the lockdown. While isolation from friends and family was difficult for some, others thrived in social seclusion. However, the situation made day-to-day life more difficult for most people, especially in areas of work and school. The pandemic also had a big impact on the school atmosphere. We all had to adapt and manage as best we could.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Coronavirus a global pandemic on the 11th of March, 2020. Originating in south west China in the region of Wuhan in November of 2020. Initially, many of us did not believe that the virus would transform our lives so dramatically. However, when measures and rules started to be incorporated into society, we started taking things more seriously. Wearing a piece of cloth on your face became an everyday necessity. Schools and businesses started closing down. People lost their jobs. It was all unexpected.

At first, the mention of schools closing was bliss and a dream come true for many of the students of Taylor's Hill! Most of us saw it as a long-awaited holiday. We could hang with our buddies, watch Netflix all day and go to discos without the worry of school hovering over us, or so we thought...The first lockdown required some of us to work with parts of the internet we hadn't



even heard of before! This was very challenging, who used Google Classroom before the pandemic? Despite this, some students saw this as a great opportunity to improve and/or learn new skills. "I cooked and exercised", said Lauren O'Reilly from second year, when we asked her how she coped. "I meditated, video chatted with my friends and downloaded TikTok" said Meghan Murphy from sixth year.

The pandemic and quarantine was even harder for our new 1<sup>st</sup> Year students who had just commenced their secondary school experience.

**"I didn't know what to expect but the year went pretty fast and in the end, I just found it hard to wake up for school" - Arina Bobrova**

The students of Taylor's Hill can all relate to this with many of them also saying they found it hard to get motivated after the quarantine. How will this affect student life in the long run? Will it affect our exam results? Will we be able to return to the normal school atmosphere as if nothing happened? The pandemic

was difficult to cope with – it was unexpected and everyone was unprepared for it. We all found it hard in some ways and we developed our own ways of dealing with the global pandemic. We pray for those who have died and for those whose lives have been changed for the worst by the pandemic. If there is one thing we all learned from this global situation, it is that you should value the time you have with friends and family and

live every bit of life to the full because who knows when you'll find yourself in the next global pandemic having to make tik toks in your bedroom with your 8 year-old brother again?

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## Green School Strikes Again!

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As many of you may know, our Green Schools Committee has been very successful in earning Green Flags for our school, and this year was no



exception.

For the past two years, we've been working on the water theme. At the same time, we have also been trying to maintain our progress in the areas of waste management and energy conservation. This included bin checks and reminders to turn off lights and computers at the end of each school-day.

When we began working on the water theme, the first thing we had to do was work out how much water we were using each week in our school. Every week, two members of our Green Schools Committee checked the water meter with our Caretaker, Tom, and recorded the results. They also conducted a daily analysis of our water use over a period of a number of weeks. We are now pleased to inform you that we've successfully managed to drop our water per

person use from 10.09 litres to 8.45 litres.

To achieve this, we put up posters around the school encouraging everyone to conserve water, and we checked all the taps for leaks. We also checked the toilets for leaks using food colouring. We spoke to the teachers about how they might conserve water, placing special emphasis on those classes where water is used regularly.

We discovered that people were bringing in single-use water bottles because they did not feel comfortable drinking water from the tap outside. To encourage the whole school community to use recyclable bottles we now have three new Water Stations installed within the school; one on each floor, for convenience.

As a result we will all have access to crystal-clear safe drinking water from now on. This is great news for us – and also a great achievement! No more need for once-off bottles! Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, we were not able to use them this year, but hopefully when we return to school in August we will be able to use our water stations!

In 2019, some of our members attended a water workshop in Athlone, sponsored by An Taisce. We

left the workshop full of ideas, including holding a **“Walk for Water”** afternoon.

This was supposed to be held on Friday 13th March 2020, instead of our “Lá Glas”. We planned to have students dress in blue, to represent water, and to hold a relay race, to remind ourselves of how far many people in the world have to travel just to get water. Due to Covid-19, our plans were halted; nevertheless, we are looking forward to holding this event as soon as we can, in the future.



However, all of our hard work has been recognised and rewarded. In 2020, we were awarded “Regional Water School of the Year 2020” and “National Water School of the Year 2020”. This is a major achievement for all of us in Dominican College. It was a very proud moment for us when it was announced that

Dominican College, Taylor's Hill, Galway were the overall National Winners for 2020!

The Mayor of Galway, Councillor Mike Cubbard, came into our school to officially present these awards and our Water Flag to us in November.

So now we have our 3rd Green Flag flying high outside the door of our school, greeting us all as we arrive each morning and bidding us goodbye each evening.

A big *Thank You* and *Well Done* to everyone in our school community

for helping us to save water and be the All Ireland Winners for Water Conservation in 2020. Without your valued and much appreciated help we could not have done what we did, or achieve what we achieved. Míle buíochas do gach uile dhuine a chabhraigh linn! Mar a deir an seanfhocal "Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine."

*By Máire Geraghty, on behalf of the Green Schools Committee. Our Green Schools Coordinator is Bn Mhic Aodha*

*Bhuí, and the other staff members on the Committee are Mr. Collins, Ms. Foy, Ms. Malone and Ms. Douglas.*



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## #andshecycles



#andshecycles focuses on encouraging young women, particularly teenagers, to cycle while recognising and discussing the reasons why they feel that cycling is not for them. Why are young women avoiding the bicycle as a means of transport? Research undertaken by the Green Schools Committee revealed that aside from the usual concerns facing every cyclist (lack of cycle lanes, safety concerns, etc.), young women were also dealing with social issues such as peer pressure; harassment on the roads from drivers and some pedestrians; and a general perception of cycling as being "uncool". #andshecycles hopes to change and challenge these issues and perceptions through video, social media and continued liaison with students. Green Schools hopes that by discussing and analysing the reasons why young women are not cycling, we can highlight the

positives, the ways to overcome the obstacles, and, through acknowledgement, help those students who might otherwise cycle to continue to do so or begin to do so in the future.

We currently have two Travel Ambassadors in our school. They are Bella Quinn from 3rd Year and Haleema Laimidi from 1st Year. Below they share their experiences:

**Bella:** "I joined #andshecycles because I noticed I was one of the only students that cycle to our school and I wanted to find out why because riding a bike is healthy, fun and a low-impact form of exercise for all ages. Over quarantine there wasn't much I could do in school because it was very difficult to organise class surveys and Green Schools meetings. Instead I set up an instagram account with 27 other #andshecycles

*ambassadors from all over Ireland. On this account we frequently post about the benefits of cycling, road safety, and cycling tips. We have even had competitions where participants could win small prizes.*

*I had the amazing opportunity to talk to an Irish cyclist, Imogen Cotter, who is currently living in Belgium. She talked all about her experiences around being a professional cyclist and the difficulties she encountered because of her gender. She mentioned how she noticed Ireland's lack of cycling infrastructure when compared to Belgium.*

*I also reached out to iRadio and during their news segment presenter Fionnuala Corbett talked about the campaign and how people could get involved.*

When we started back at school I started to do more specific research around what stops our students from cycling to school. I went to all of the Junior Cert classes and asked why they didn't cycle to school. Many students said that they were discouraged from cycling because they feel like they would be judged and made fun of for wearing a helmet, while others said that they didn't feel they had a safe way of getting to school because of the lack of cycle lanes. Using the information that I gained, I had a meeting with Mr Kinsella, the Green Schools teachers and some members of the Green Schools Committee. There, I

informed them about the difficulties that our students face when riding a bike to school and some easy solutions that we could implement in our school, such as extra bike racks and lockers, especially for bike gear such as helmets or wet gear. I also informed Galway City Council about students feeling unsafe riding to school because of the lack of bike lanes and asked about their future plans for bike lanes for the Taylors Hill road.

I reached out to the RTÉ program news2day which is a news show for primary school children and they visited the school to shoot a segment for World Bike Day."

**Haleema:** I joined the #andshecycles ambassador programme because I was amazed at how few teenage girls in secondary school cycle to school compared to boys. The reasons for people not cycling vary from there being no proper place to put their cycling equipment, to their school bags being too heavy to cycle with. I couldn't really do anything online either because it was hard to communicate with other people when not being face to face. However, when I got back to school a couple of friends and I held an environmental poster competition emphasizing cycling and the #andshecycles ambassador programme for 1<sup>st</sup> Years. We got bicycle helmets, hi-vis jackets and bike lights from Halfords and another helmet from the Westside community bike shop as well as some sweets. The competition was a huge success with a lot of entries. The majority of the posters had pictures of bicycles in them showing that people understood how beneficial cycling can be. Joining the #andshecycles programme has given me an insight into some of the problems that schools nationally face with cycling."

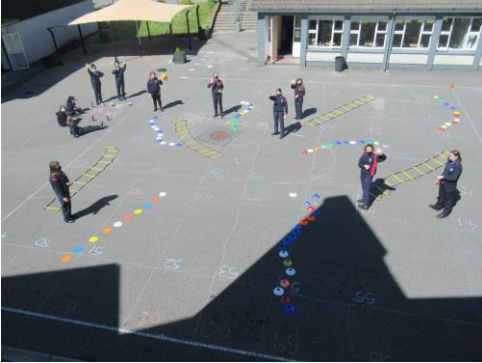
This year's 1<sup>st</sup> Years took part in an Art competition earlier this year in conjunction with the #environment and the #andshecycles tag. Their artwork was really innovative and promoted the idea of cycling to school.

The winner, Tieraney Wei, received a bike helmet and chocolate. The runners-up received hi-vis jackets. It was great to see all the younger students getting involved in such an important initiative.

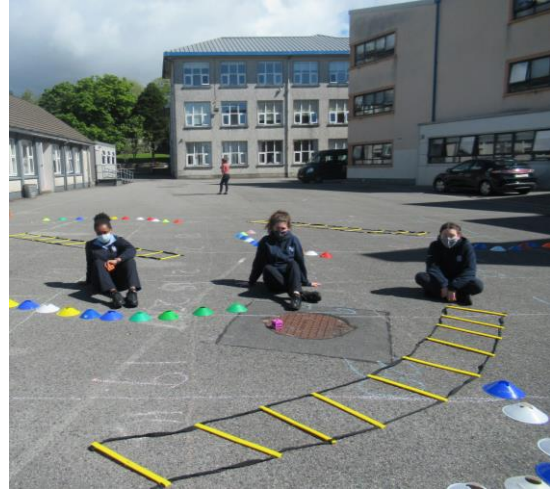
From left to right: Ms.Byrnes, Haleema Lamidi, Lilian Hynes, Evanna Nirish, Aarushi Samal, Tierney Wei, Merci Chikwanha, Clara Lee.



# 1<sup>st</sup> Year Fun



During the week of the 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> May, a number of our TY students planned activity sessions for our 1<sup>st</sup> Years. The TYs organised games and puzzles for the for the girls.



# Out and About

The start of 5<sup>th</sup> Year usually has an ecstatic atmosphere as the students begin to audition for the annual school musical. This normally allows the previous TYs and 3<sup>rd</sup> Years to get to know each other while participating in a fun activity. As we all know, this year was different. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, the show could not take place, but the disappointment was soon overcome by Ms. Knight's brilliant idea to have a team-building day for 5<sup>th</sup> Years.

On Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December, the 5<sup>th</sup> years had a day filled with fun team building. Dominican College brought people in from Petersburg Adventure Centre who worked with the year group in team building exercises (socially distanced of course!). From orienteering to puzzle solving, there were a number of different games and group challenges for everyone to enjoy.



*5<sup>th</sup> Years walking on tightropes*

Despite the Irish weather, the pupils then went for a delightful walk on the prom to add to the marvellous day. On the way, they stopped for hot chocolate, tea and coffee in Ground & Co, which kept them nice and warm as they continued down to the beach, where the tranquil waves could be heard and the sea air taken in. It goes without saying that everyone had an incredible day, making new friendships that will last long after 6<sup>th</sup> Year graduation!

## A Message from Our Head Girl and Deputy Head Girl



We find it hard to believe that the time has finally come to say goodbye to our enormous house on Taylor's Hill. This senior cycle of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year has been one like no other for us all. Throughout the Covid pandemic, we stood by one another, we respected each other's health and wellbeing both within our own family, at home and our larger family at school. We have certainly experienced the highs and lows of secondary school but we made it to the other side. We have grown a lot over the years, both mentally and physically and we have built relationships with unbreakable bonds. The memories we have made are timeless thanks to they strong resilient year group that we are proud to be a part of. Of course, our time here at Taylors would not be the same without the indescribable support of the teaching staff, our Year Head Ms. Kerrigan, Mr. O' Doherty and Mr. Kinsella. We will take our school values and pride as Taylor's Girls to whichever path life takes us in the future.

-Carmen Lobato and Iziegbe Osayim.

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# A Word from Our Principal



It was with great pleasure that I was invited to write a few words for the Summer 2021 newsletter. What makes this edition all the more special is it is the first one to be totally organized, planned, written and designed by our students – all under the supportive guidance of Ms. Barrett. I want to say a very big thank you to all those girls who contributed to this publication and made it as unique as it is. This demonstrates not only the organizational, creative and literary talents of Taylor's girls but also their initiative and leadership. Well done, and thank you!

There is no doubt that the 2020/21 school year has been one like no other. As with other schools worldwide, we faced many difficulties and challenges throughout the year – face masks, social distancing, hand sanitizing, student-based classrooms, the constant sanitizing of classroom furniture, not to mention the lockdown between Christmas and Easter.

The manner in which all of this has been undertaken by the students and staff in our school is a testament to the care and respect we show for each other and ourselves. Thanks to the procedures put in place, the ongoing vigilance by our Covid coordinators Ms. Gallagher and Ms. Corbett, and the cooperation of all the members of our school community, we were able to ensure that not one case of Covid was transmitted in the school. We sincerely thank you all for taking this so seriously and for playing your role in keeping our school a safe place to be.

I very much hope that you all have a well-earned, enjoyable break over the summer. You thoroughly deserve it after the manner in which you have dealt with the challenges of this school year and how you rose to those challenges. As people, we grow and develop by facing new situations, adapting to those situations, and finding new ways to deal with them. How you have dealt with all that you have had to face over the past 15 months is a testament to your strength, resilience, and ability to grow, develop, and mature. You should be very proud of yourselves. Well done, and have a lovely summer.

Regards,

Alan Kinsella