

St. Leo's College Carlow

Students Reaction to Covid-19 Lockdown



First Year Student



When I woke up on March 12th 2020, it was a normal day however when I returned home everything had changed dramatically and will probably never be the same again.

For the majority of life we have a roadmap to guide us through, however for Covid-19, there were no answers, the government, healthcare services, education system, everyone was in the same boat.

The first week of distance learning especially as a first year, I found it was the most challenging as I live in the countryside and uploading my work was a little difficult. I also personally prefer to learn in a group rather than alone.

However I have found the Microsoft Teams app a great way of learning and communicating with both my teachers and friends. All of my teachers have been so supportive and patient and I am mindful of the fact that distance learning is new to both pupils and teachers!

I am not going to lie, this whole experience has had its highs and lows, I am very close with both of my Grandmothers and not able to give them a hug has been difficult and you also appreciate your teachers so much more when your Mum is trying to teach Algebra and you don't know who is actually the teacher and who is the student !

Despite this I have embraced it all and if I could take one positive thing from all this mayhem, it would be how wonderful it has been to spend quality time with my family and appreciate the simple things in life!

To keep physically and mentally healthy I have been going on family runs or cycles to see my Grandmothers from a distance as they are over 70 and are cocooning, baking delicious treats, being creative by keeping a Covid-19 journal, and when I am feeling down listen to positive songs or podcasts.

Last Saturday our local GAA Club, Crettyard, brought the whole community together to run 400km in a day for the DoitforDan campaign, while each family ran separately, there was a great sense of community spirit.

I am very aware that we still have a long road ahead of us but hopefully we will all get through this healthy and safe, and with a better understanding and appreciation of life. Stay safe!

I have attached some photos: one of my family after running for the DoitforDan campaign, another of a chocolate cake I made and the last one is of my Covid-19 journal.

Alannagh Willoughby – 1st year

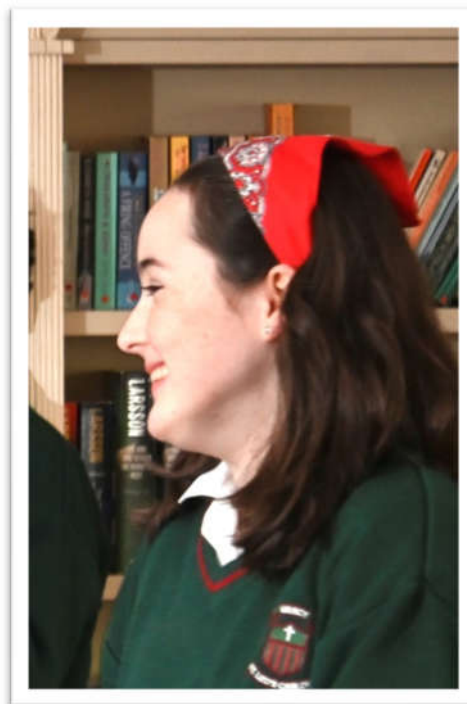
Second Year Student

My family has been brought together by this outbreak and we have treasured this valuable time. Good weather has helped, as we ventured into the neglected glasshouse and garden. We have planted vegetables and a willow arch which will always remind us of this time.

Each day Eve, Clíodhna and I walk together chatting for an hour or so, creating moments of memories for us all. Eoghan has taken to the kitchen. His delicious cheesecake was my favourite

School has changed as I sit at home to log on at 9am. Teachers assign work through TEAMS and we have zoom meetings and watch Ms. Tallon's Maths videos on YouTube. What is important is that we all try our best to learn from these methods, no matter how difficult it is to concentrate.

Social Media allows me to maintain contact with my friends. We all seem to have mutual feelings regarding the lockdown. I cannot wait until this is all over and we can all see each other again.



Isabelle McGlinchey: 2nd year

Third Year Student

As of the 12th March, my classmates and I haven't attended school due to COVID-19. Upon the announcement, many of us were delighted with the prospect of no school without realising the seriousness of the situation. When I think back to that day, I certainly hadn't imagined that schools would still be closed, 6 weeks later. Although the students can't attend school as we know it, we have adapted to online learning.

We have online classes with our teachers via Teams and Zoom. Although this resembles a classroom situation, it's not really the same. Why? Not everyone has a quiet environment to work in, poor internet access and people aren't as vocal in online classes as in school. One of the things I find difficult about isolation is not being able to see my family and friends, although chatting through social media, it's not the same. I now have the time to do things that I haven't been able to do because of school and being involved in sports, such as reading and baking.

Abby Byrne: 3rd Year

Transition Year Student

As a Transition Year student, I find distance education is working well. We are receiving schoolwork regularly on Microsoft Teams. Structuring my own day has improved my self-discipline. As part of the TY curriculum, we can engage in online activities like GAA coaching courses and career investigations.

Distance learning isn't always easy. For example, one would miss the nuances of personal interaction. In addition, it is weird for a lot of people not playing team sports. However, there is a great sense of community enveloping the country as many challenge videos are being shared. The likes of the GAA Solo challenges, Joe Wicks PE and #wintostayin challenges, to name a few, are great ways to maintain regular physical activity.

It is important to support your own wellbeing during this time. In the evening my family and I go for walks and talks to get some fresh air. My friends and I are staying connected through social media.

As Robert Sandel said: "If it wasn't for distance education right now, we'd be in big trouble". I couldn't agree more.

Emma Hughes: Transition Year

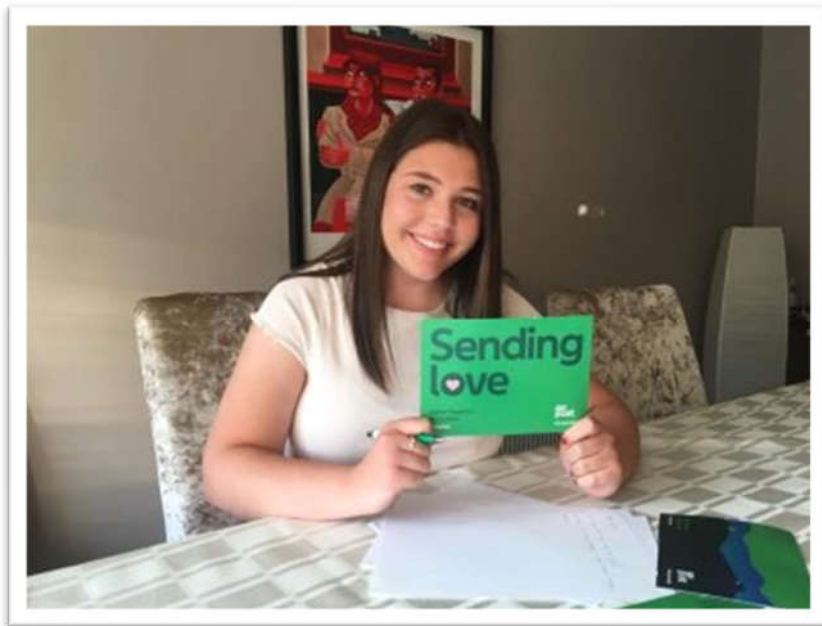


Fifth Year Student

During these unwonted times, we are all having to adjust to the abnormal circumstances, which like everything comes with both pros and cons. At this stage I'm probably getting on my family's nerves, understandably so, and they are getting on mine. I have more time now than ever to spend with my pets, maybe go for a run or try to bake something different and I'm learning to appreciate the world of a two km radius that I'm now confined to.

Online classes have brought the same triumphs and tribulations experienced by all of the year groups; trying to understand a concept through a computer screen, assignments flying in all at once or having to mute your mic to inform a particularly loud family member that you're on a zoom call! We have less excuses for late homework but sadly, at the same time, due to our situation, a whole lot more. I think as quarantine progresses, I'm settling back into a routine that's probably quite different from my old one, I'm understanding that a simple call or text can improve someone's day and learning to appreciate the many things I do have to be thankful for.

Fifth Year Student



I had written about 20 letters to friends and family members since the lockdown began and had just received a postcard from a good friend of mine and I tweeted about it just saying how it really lifted my mood. A BBC journalist was keen on writing an article about how young people are turning to old methods of communicating by ditching technology and picking up a pen! She rang me and asked if I wanted to go on BBC World Service Newsday early that morning, at 6:30am, and I said I would be honoured! It was really exciting. The BBC got my number and rang me last Tuesday morning and we discussed the An Post initiative about sending two postcards to each household to get people writing and all different kinds of stuff. Then once it had come out all my friends were so lovely sharing it around on social media and amongst family members. The later on Tuesday evening Sue Nunn interviewed me on KCLR which was so lovely! So yes Tuesday was definitely out of the ordinary you might say!

Riona Nolan: Fifth Year

Fifth Year Student

I virtually attended this year's **European Youth Event (EYE)**. I had been invited to attend in Strasbourg however due to the cancellation of this year's EYE event in Strasbourg I was invited to take part in the event virtually. It was a unique opportunity to virtually meet other young Europeans and inspire each other and exchange our views with experts, activists, influencers and decision makers. **The event was initiated and hosted by** the European

Parliament since 2014 with the aim of stimulating active citizenship amongst young Europeans.

In the opening ceremony, we began with a welcome/introduction along with the European anthem.

I was live with many project managers, authors, CEOs, Members of the European Parliament and many other international participants. We began by discussing the current challenges of social distancing and mental health. Throughout the event many topics were discussed such as : Education after Covid-19, How social media influencers can empower their audience while staying at home, How to deal with news, disinformation and fake news during a pandemic crisis and a Q&A all about the European Parliament and an insight into many projects/initiatives that have been conducted to date. It was very interesting and truly humbling to be a part of the first ever virtual European Youth Event. Through engaging in discussion, contributing opinions and listening to each person's ideas it was a true success and it was evident that there was a strong sense of European unity, even though the event was conducted through a screen. By working together, staying apart, it is possible that we can achieve many positive outcomes!

Shauna Downey: Fifth year

Sixth Year Student

I am Orlaith Hickson, a Sixth-Year student in St. Leo's College Carlow, and I have been learning at home for six weeks. I do consider myself lucky as I have had a great amount of support from my family, friends and the school. I knew learning from home would be a challenge and it has proved to be one of the hardest things I have done. My teachers have been great, checking in with us every day and sending us work through Teams but this doesn't even begin to compare with the interaction school gives us with our teachers. It is overwhelming at times the amount of work waiting for you on your Teams account each morning and we miss out on the social interaction with our friends, but I found the best solution to staying motivated is keeping busy with leisure activities. I am an athlete at Carlow Rowing Club, and I have an amazing team of coaches who encourage us to train from home. We go running and do circuits online together via Zoom. I found staying in touch with friends is one of the best ways to stay positive during these hard times and facetimeing a friend can change your mood in minutes.

Orlaith Hickson Sixth Year