

Spring into Summer *Newsletter 2021*



During this time of national and global crisis we are thankful to be able to share some positive stories with you.

The pandemic is still having a significant impact on all sectors but has been particularly difficult on families of children with special needs. Like all families they have struggled to keep their children safe but also to maintain their children's emotional and physical well-being.

We have all been doing our best during this time. In St. Gabriel's our priority remains to continue to support and provide services while adhering to government guidelines to ensure the safety of staff and clients.

Delivering virtual programmes during Covid-19



The pandemic has brought about changes in the way healthcare and therapies are delivered in everyday practice. We now work face to face and online to deliver telehealth programmes to children with disabilities and their families.

Sherley is a speech and language therapist and Patrick an occupational therapist both working as part of the Children's Disability Network Team based at St. Gabriel's. The team continues to deliver parent training programmes and individual sessions with children via Zoom and feedback has been very positive. Patrick and Sherley reported that families have said, they find the virtual appointments really useful and a great way to communicate and get support. Having video calls has worked well for some families who otherwise would have to travel or would have child care difficulties. For some parents it is more comfortable to attend from their own home. In individual sessions with children, some of the children have reported that they are familiar with doing work online from school and are comfortable with online sessions. Being tech savvy has certainly helped many of the children and young people we work with. Reflecting on the African proverb "when the music changes, so does the dance" Patrick went on to say "we too have had to adapt to changes that arrived unexpectedly and find new innovative ways of working with children and their families".

Minister announces funding for children's respite house

We were delighted when Minister Anne Rabbitte, Minister of State with responsibility for Disability recently announced her Department would make funding available to enable St. Gabriel's Children's Respite House open. Overnight respite is a vital service for families of children with complex needs. It can have a really positive impact and provide immeasurable relief for the family. It is living proof of the generosity of people from all walks of life who supported the development of this respite facility. They helped make the dream a reality. We are planning to open this beautiful facility in early Summer.



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Marking 60th year anniversary

St. Gabriel's continues to make a difference to many children's lives. This year we are commemorating 60 years since St. Gabriel's School & Centre was set up in 1961 by Arthur and Wyn Crabtree. Its first home was in St. Joseph's Street but in 1997 a special school providing health-related therapies opened in Dooradoyle. Progress continued with the development of a number of specialist services including Hydrotherapy and Orthotics and the creation of the Treehouse Children's Disability Network Team. Another milestone will be reached this year with the opening of the first purpose built Children's Respite House at Mungret.

St. Gabriel's Orthotics

The orthotics department are following government Covid-19 guidelines to ensure the safety of our clients and staff while continuing to offer in-clinic orthotic appointments.

It was a delight to be involved in a very interesting Young Scientists project with two transition year students from Laurel Hill Secondary School. The aim of Joanna and Lucy's project was to develop a prototype leg splint (AFO) to assist mobility for people with Charcot Marie Tooth, a type of muscular dystrophy and raise awareness of the condition. We were grateful to be asked to get involved in the research and development of their prototype AFO. Well done Lucy and Joanna.



St. Gabriel's School

As school principal I am happy to report that despite the interruptions to the school year life has been remarkably busy for the students and staff in St. Gabriel's School. Everyone has been active, upbeat, and positively engaged. Class hydrotherapy pool sessions have been immense fun for students and staff alike with most classes having had at least 3 sessions and with more to come. In class we are currently focusing on the use of switch technologies to aid communication and enhance engagement for all students. Much of the funding for this project has been raised by the Parents association. As we look forward to the improving weather, we are aiming to get outside more and make the most of our wonderful outdoor spaces.



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St. Gabriel's Hydrotherapy Service

Families are overjoyed that the hydrotherapy pool is back open again for children attending St. Gabriel's School & Centre. Parents have said they feel very safe due to the limited numbers at each session. Children are progressing through their programmes set out by the physiotherapist and parents have happily told us that their children are showing progress and even their sleeping patterns have improved. Hydrotherapy has significant health and social benefits for children with complex needs and for most of them it is their only outlet during Covid-19 when everywhere else is closed.

Generosity during the pandemic

We are very grateful to many private donors, companies and businesses who continue to give their support to St. Gabriel's throughout the pandemic. The harsh reality is that our regular fundraisers have all been cancelled but the need for donations, sponsorship and funding support remains as great as ever.

To mark our 60th year anniversary this year we will be launching a different fundraising appeal in early summer. We will be asking the public to make a special donation. If you are willing to use your resources to support the appeal we would be extremely grateful. A gift no matter what the size can be very meaningful and have a life changing impact to help improve the quality of life for children with disabilities who need it.



We would love to hear from you so please get in touch with us.

Wishing everyone a pleasant and safe Easter.

Warmest wishes

Kate Sheahan

Kate Sheahan
St. Gabriel's





Contact us

St. Gabriel's School & Centre,
Springfield Drive, Dooradoyle, Limerick.

T: +353 61 302733 *E:* info@stgabriels.ie
www.stgabriels.ie

