

Proud day for first graduates of Ballymakenny College



Students, from left to right Kelly Traynor Murphy, Raluca Bouros, Sarah Mannion, Lizwe Tafuma, Liam MacEaney. Staff, from left to right, Deputy Principal Mike Lyons, Principal Alan Mynes and 6th Year House Leader Shane Grennan

by ALISON COMYN

THEY say from tiny acorns grow mighty oaks, and from humble beginnings in 2014, Ballymakenny College has just celebrated its first batch of graduates.

92 students completed their Leaving Certificate in 2020, and last Wednesday, a handful of the success stories returned to the corridors for the first time since March, to share their good news

and bid farewell to their teachers and mentors.

Principal Alan Mynes was on hand with congratulatory words, and was akin to a proud mother hen as he addressed the 'past-pupils'!

'There were just 63 that started with us in 2014, now we have 920 students with us and it's down to these students, and they didn't realise it at the time, what an impact they had on the school and the formation of the school,' he said. 'We didn't know what we were doing half the time, but we

knew we had a great bunch of kids, and we knew that the school would do well because of that.'

The first Educate Together second level school, Ballymakenny College was pioneering in many ways, and even when they didn't have their own facility - they started on the grounds of Aston Village ET - they were also the first local school to ditch books for iPads.

'I know it wasn't like we thought it would be at the end of the year, we didn't get a chance to

say thank you to all of you as ambassadors for our school. I don't have to promote the school too much, as all of that was done by students like you, and we're really happy you have done so well, and worked so hard for the past six years,' said Mr Mynes. 'Some of the circumstances were tough - we didn't have everything we needed in the new building - but it goes to show that if you have the willingness to do something, nothing will stop you.'

Class of '20 flourished under challenging circumstances

ABSENT are the usual shrieks, hugs, kisses, high-fives or whatever celebrations teens normally greet their graduation day with.

Instead representing the class of '20 were five well-behaved students, who had all just accepted their first choice of third level courses after successful Leaving Cert results.

Sarah Mannion was one of the first students to attend the school in 2014, and says it's a little weird to have left in such an abrupt way.

'We didn't have that closure from a ceremony so it still feels like I'm going to go back,' says the Duleek native with a smile. 'I've just accepted Psychology in Trinity College and honestly, it was only in the last year I really decided what I wanted to do, and I actually think the lockdown helped me narrow down my choices and forced me to focus on what I wanted to do.'

Kelly Traynor Murphy transferred to the school in second year, and says it was the best thing she ever did.

'My personality changed for the better when I moved because of the people who were here and the atmos-



Ballymakenny College

phere was completely different to anywhere else,' she says. 'It's nice and calm and peaceful.'

There's almost been an upside to the pandemic for Kelly, as she's accepted her first choice of General nursing in

Trinity College.

'I've wanted to be a nurse since I was a little girl, and because of COVID, the demand for places went down, so it almost worked to my advantage,' she says.

Also glad of the online classes was Lizwe Tafuma, who certainly showed dedication and determination attending the school, as for the last two years, he had travel from Banbridge, Co Down.

'We lived in Drogheda but my mum moved to Banbridge, and I was able to stay with my sister for a while, but then had to get up really early to get a train for all of 6th year,' explains Lizwe. 'Actually, lockdown was good for me as it gave me a bit of a break from the travel!'

With 589 points, he is now due to start his chosen course in DCU - Global Business USA - which means his last two years will be spent in an American university.

Liam MacEaney is a well-known face to rugby fans in Drogheda, having played for Boyne throughout most of his school career, but would a move to University of Limerick now mean he would be eyeing up a place with Munster?

'I want to teach DCG and Technology, and yeah with the course being in Limerick, I might have to trail for

Munster,' he jokes. 'This was a great school to go to, and it was weird at the start to be on top of Aston Village primary school and we had a corridor and that was it,' he recalls. 'And then moving in here there was nearly too much space, as there were only two years but by this year, we were back to having no space again!'

Hoping to return to the school in a few years' time - as a teacher not a student - is Raluca Bouros.

'I'm just over the moon with my results and with my offer of a Bachelor of Arts in Maynooth, and I just can't wait to start,' says Raluca. 'It's been a horrible year, and we've missed out on so much, but I can tell you that my time in Ballymakenny College has been amazing, and in 2018, I got Student of the Year, which I never would have expected, and it really has been the best school, and I really want to come back here and teach.'

Every one of them thanks the staff and principal Alan Mynes for their efforts from day one of their schooling to their final days, as they all embark on an exciting new journey.