

Life in and out of lockdowns was a huge challenge for children, not only educationally and socially but in how they thought about their lives and society. This article offers one perspective from a primary school pupil on the hopes and fears felt and the practical and psychological adjustments made during the pandemic.

In the summer of 2020, when we were told that the schools were to reopen, this was followed by joy among students, teachers, and parents alike. By now, people are more familiar with Covid-19, but there are many things that are unclear and still need to be discovered. Scientists are constantly finding variants of the disease that can affect people differently, causing more concerns and doubts around the world.

For the first lockdown, remote learning was implemented, but the return to school for the year 2020–2021 brought many other changes in the way we interact with other students. Washing our hands was mandatory, keeping distance from each other and from other classes was introduced, and a new rule that was applied inside each class consisted of sitting within pods.

The reopening of schools was seen as a light of hope and the start of a new normality. The restrictions were slowly starting to be lifted. But this soon changed, unfortunately, and even if people were looking forward to Christmas, we knew that everything was about to change after the holidays. Case numbers went higher and higher, and suddenly it was the beginning of a second lockdown. The schools closed once again.

We were expecting new restrictions but not a second lockdown. With the changes to education made in the first lockdown, we were all prepared for the situation, and this made learning easier. We were able to continue using Seesaw and other platforms, and we kept in touch with each other regularly.

What I enjoyed about remote learning was that I could do my work on my own time, and it also gave me the opportunity to improve my writing skills. What I didn't enjoy was not being able to share my opinions in class or to see my classmates and teacher. I never believed I would miss school.

Coming Out of Covid-19

A student's voice



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The restrictions were brought back, and this caused many businesses to close forever. This time, they could not survive another lockdown. This was devastating for the many people who lost their jobs. Meanwhile, the government decided to gradually lift the restrictions for schools yet again.

Eventually, in April, we were back in school with the same restrictions. We were all happy to be back, but we took more precautions to avoid the same mistakes as before. At the same time, we had the news of the first vaccine.

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The news of the vaccine led to a whole new perspective of the pandemic; it brought many concerns but at the same time relief around the world. Even if many people were afraid of the vaccine, many others were and still are eager to get protected, because as a society it is our responsibility to be immunised and to win the fight against Covid-19. Scientists are continuing to research for new vaccines and to improve the ones already developed, and this gives optimism for a new beginning.

Many people say that it is the end of the coronavirus. I don't think it's 'the end' of Covid-19 but the beginning of a new time after Covid-19. Your life will never go back to how it was before the pandemic; it will never be the same again. There will always be Covid-19 and all the traumatic events it brought with it. You will always have the memory of the pandemic and the gifts you never knew you had that you found during it.

This experience has taught me to appreciate the smaller things in life and how time is precious. I learned how to live together with Covid-19, but at the same time it took away my time to spend with my loved ones abroad. Covid-19 is and will always be memorable to everyone that has gone through it. The loss, sickness, and pain that we all felt as a community is unforgettable, yet here we are, still hoping for the end of Covid-19.

ONE MILLION TREES SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN

Schoolgirls Amber Heneghan, Nicole Connolly and Sienna Heneghan from Maynooth were at the site of Ireland's oldest tree – at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth – for the launch of the schools campaign to plant one million trees in Ireland and Africa to combat climate change.

The Self Help Africa campaign is supported by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and by the Gaelic Players Association (GPA).

Schools can join in by visiting: selfhelpafrica.org/onemilliontrees/schools

