



## A dream comes true for St. Michael's School!

A big thank you to the County Roscommon Special Needs Association for making it possible for St. Michael's to pursue a dream. The financial support received from the Association enabled the school to proceed to commission a hydrotherapy pool in the new Therapy and Sports Complex.

### Therapy and Sports Complex

An **autism-specific outdoor unit** enables all children to enjoy a multitude of teaching resources in a responsive and exciting environment. Children have access to a range of tactile, sensorial and structured equipment which benefits physical and social interactions. In accordance with recent research into Autism, the structure includes three specific elements – motivational, academic and relaxation to encourage interaction between peers in a comfortable setting. Teachers use the unit in conjunction with class teaching to deliver language, maths and all curricular areas in a fun and innovative manner. The design strategically addresses issues around transition, predictability, change management and self regulation.

The **indoor activity centre** allows children to access the curriculum in a structured but playful environment that offers a variety of resources to stimulate and motivate intellectual and physical development. Children have opportunities to refine skills in group, paired and individual situations. This fun-filled experience enhances imagination and interaction whilst encouraging problem-solving and choice-making abilities.

The **therapy wing** includes a range of facilities designed to address the needs of students with multiple and complex disabilities. Physically, some students need interventions to address difficulties in analysing visual spatial differences and some have sensory processing deficits. Specialised equipment can be used in the delivery of individualised therapies within educational programmes to promote greater success in learning. Also perceptual barriers, aversion to stimuli and poor executive functioning require remediation through exploration, stimulation and relaxation. As part of the IEP process and the holistic approach to teaching, access to the new range of facilities will enable children to maximise their full social, emotional and academic potential.

The **hydrotherapy pool** will assist teachers in advancing the development of co – ordination and motivation. Students with developmental delay will benefit significantly from this purpose-built initiative. The endless pool facility is specifically designed to create a water current of varying intensities to assist in teaching aquatics. Innovative and integrated teaching approaches will be enhanced by this on-site, accessible teaching tool.

*The school would especially like to thank all who helped in any way with this development. Individuals, local businesses and friends of the school have been so generous during difficult economic times for everyone. Staff, students and parents are deeply indebted for this wonderful and uplifting support.*

*The members of the County Roscommon Association are especially to be commended for the time, energy and assistance they provide. Their involvement fosters increased awareness and affirmation.  
Congratulations to all members of the Special Needs Association at branch and executive level on their achievements.*