



***Knockanes National School, Headford,
Killarney, Co. Kerry, V93HX80.***

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13150Q***

Knockanes National School

Our Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan

Improving Reading Fluency & Phonological Awareness across the school through the introduction of levelled reading approach.

Introduction:

Knockanes NS is a semi-rural co-educational primary school, located outside Killarney town. There are 75 pupils/ 46 Families in the school. There are 3 mainstream classes, 1 full time SET, 1 part-time SET, 3 full time SNA and 1 part-time SNA. The school population has risen steadily in the last number of years, and staff and Board of Management continue to strive to progress and develop all aspects of teaching and learning in a safe and holistic environment.

Outcomes of our last improvement plan from 2018 - 2021

- On the advice of the Inspectorate and following staff discussions, our focus for the last improvement plan was to identify a curricular area and create a whole school plan to allow all teachers and staff to carry out the strands and strand units in a more comprehensive and integrated way. The curricular area that was chosen was Physical Education.
- Our school has since drafted and developed a Whole School Plan for Physical Education incorporating the Fundamental Movement Skills programme. This plan was ratified by the Board of Management on 14/05/2020 and is being fully implemented in the school.

Review of the Impact of COVID19 (Sept 2022-June 2023)

COVID-19 has undeniably impacted the education system in significant ways. The closure of schools and the disruption to learning that children and young people experienced, have had, for many of them, a considerable and immediately negative impact on their learning and progress in several areas of the curriculum – particularly Literacy & Numeracy. In addition, there is evidence that children's and young people's social and emotional skills and wellbeing have been adversely affected, as well as the normal progression and maturing that we expect to see in their ability and motivation to engage in learning.

In order to ascertain the opinion of pupils, staff and parents on the impact of COVID19 on the pupils of our school, a survey using Google Forms was presented to the parents and staff. Pupils were also surveyed. Opinions were sought in 5 particular areas,

The impact of COVID 19 on pupils'

- Educational experiences
- Educational Outcomes
- Well-being
- Motivation to learn
- Engagement in learning

Opportunities were also given to the respondents to leave comments on each question.

Results of Surveys

- Pupil Surveys: Student Council: Impact of Covid-19 discussion group
- Pupils (3rd – 6th): Questionnaire on Literacy

Findings of the pupil surveys regarding the impact of COVID19 & Literacy

Pupils from 3rd to 6th Classes: Pupils from these senior classes were surveyed regarding their experience and opinions of Literacy, reading, writing and oral expression. Pupils were generally quite positive when it came to their literacy experience. Pupils reported be confident readers with a comfortable ability to utilize their word recognition and phonological awareness skills. Some pupils noted that they were lacking some confidence when it came to contributing to classroom debates and oral discussions. Most pupils noted that they used the computer sometimes to write stories in school whilst some were confident that that they were 'good at writing' and understood what skills were important for being a 'good writer'. Pupils in general felt that they found spellings easy to learn while some were unsure as to what skills were important for being a 'good speller'. Overall the pupils' opinions towards literacy were positive with some noting a lack of confidence in general regarding certain aspects e.g. oral language and spelling.

Pupils of the Student Council reported finding it very difficult to concentrate on schoolwork at home. They reported finding they hadn't an adult always available to them to explain area they found confusing and when they did have an adult available, they sometimes found the adult couldn't explain material as competently as their teacher. Some pupils had no internet access or had a device that had to be shared among siblings which also caused problems.

Even though pupils felt they had caught up with a lot of the material they had missed during covid, some pupils reported finding it more difficult to speak in the classroom situation now that they had got in the habit of working alone.

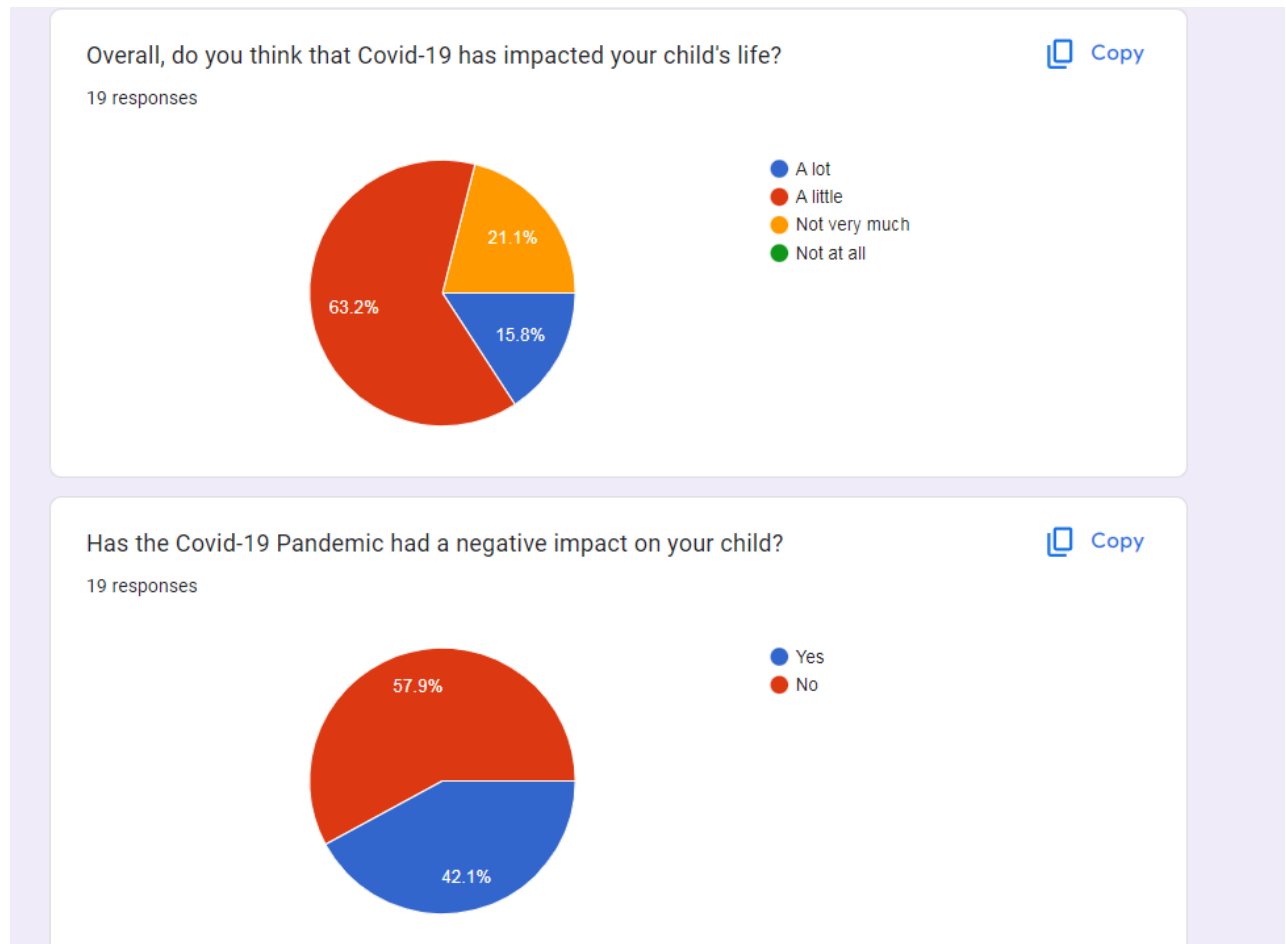
Pupils reported, for the most part, that they were very happy to be back at school and they were delighted to be engaging in classroom lessons again. This joy was a huge motivating factor in their enthusiasm for learning. Two pupils reported that they lost their interest in education during Covid having enjoyed the break from the pressure of school and now were not motivated to be back in school.

Most pupils reported being glad to be back at school to meet their friends and engage in extra curricular activities.

Through the survey on Literacy, it was useful to gather information regarding Literacy in particular. This was due to the fact that teachers and support staff had noted a drop in literacy levels particularly in the areas of fluency, word identification skills and phonological awareness.

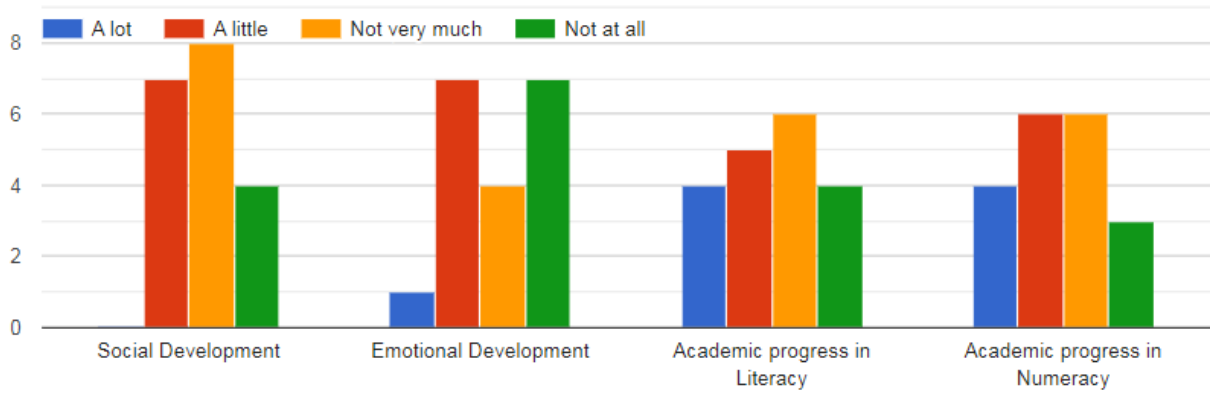
Parent Responses (Google Forms):

Parents in general commented on the impact Covid-19 had on the social and emotional wellbeing of their child(ren). 58% of those surveyed noted that Covid-19 did not have a negative impact on their child. There was less of an emphasis on academic progress with some noting that pupils who experienced difficulties in literacy and numeracy quickly caught up with support received on return to school.



Please rate the negative impact Covid-19 has had on your child pertaining to the following:

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Any further comments:

5 responses

No

At the time it was tough. However our child was an avid reader and good at maths so was able to progress herself at home.

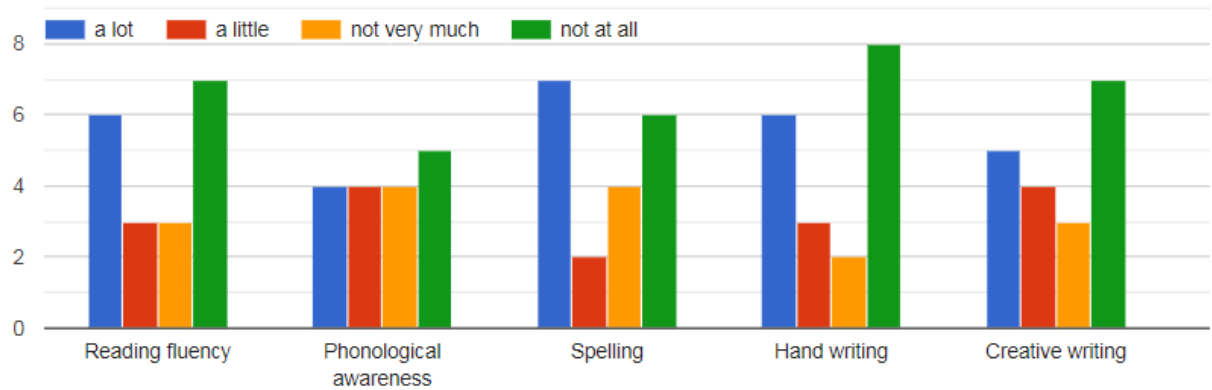
She wasn't in school when covid hit

 struggled a little with some maths and spellings after Covid but caught up quickly with help at school.

She found reading and maths very hard after Covid , the additional help provided at school resolved this.

How do you feel that areas of Literacy were impacted by Covid-19 and school closures:

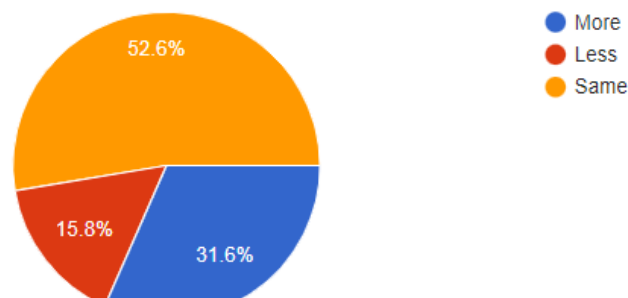
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During the Covid-19 pandemic, was your child more active, less active or about the same as before?

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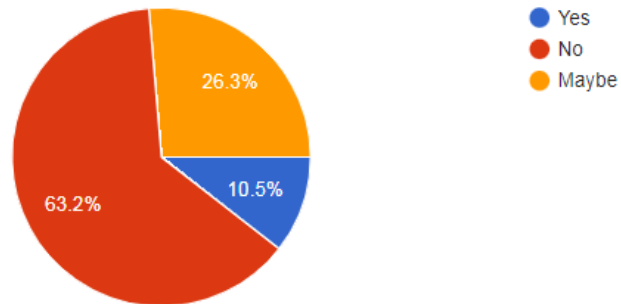
19 responses



As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, is your child more anxious?

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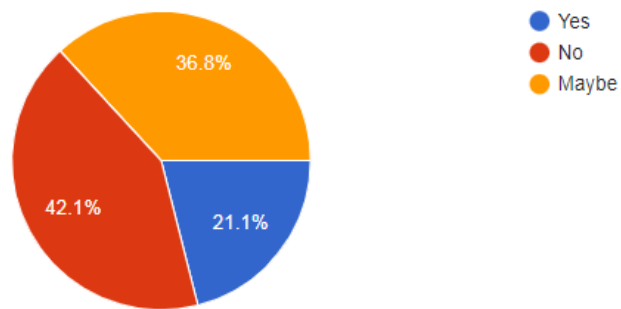
19 responses



Overall, has your child improved their digital technology skills during the Covid-19 pandemic?

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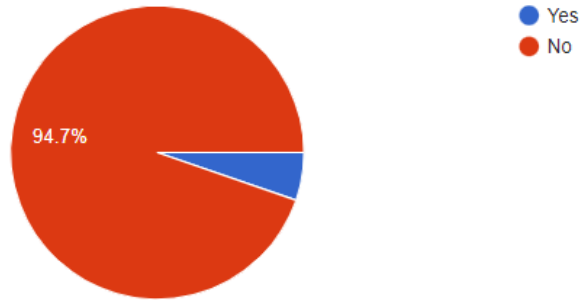
19 responses



Has Covid-19 had a positive impact on your child?

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19 responses



Any further comments:

2 responses

She really missed the social aspect of school life and the daily routine

She missed the social aspect of school life and interaction with others .

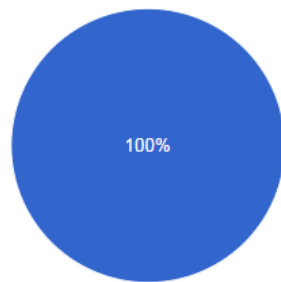
Staff Responses (Google Forms):

Staff Responses can be seen below. These results indicate that pupils' literacy skills were most negatively impacted by the Covid-19 school closure according to those staff members surveyed. The areas of reading fluency and phonological awareness in particular stand out as significant areas of literacy that were in need of a targeted approach to aid pupil progress and development.

Overall, do you think that Covid-19 has impacted the pupils' in our school?

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5 responses

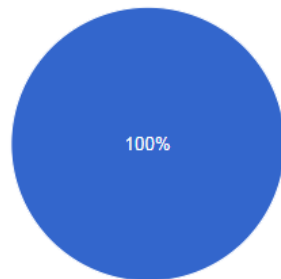


- A lot
- A little
- Not very much
- Not at all

Has the Covid-19 Pandemic had a negative impact on pupils?

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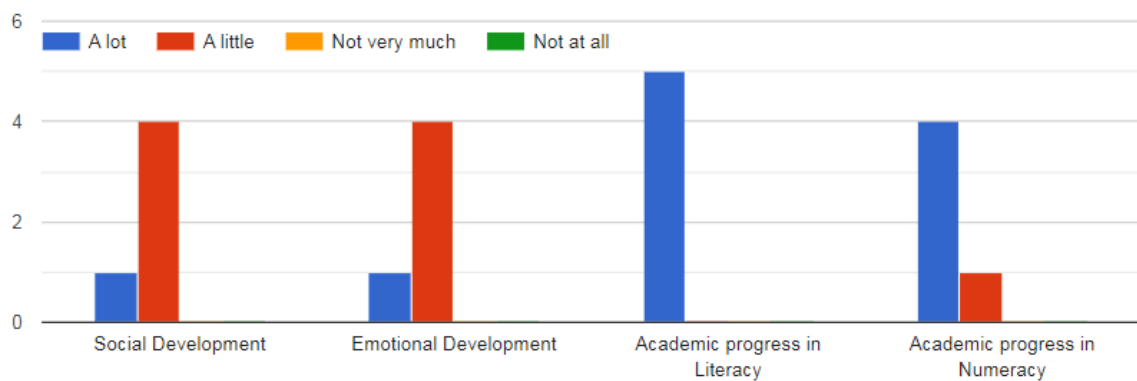
5 responses



- Yes
- No

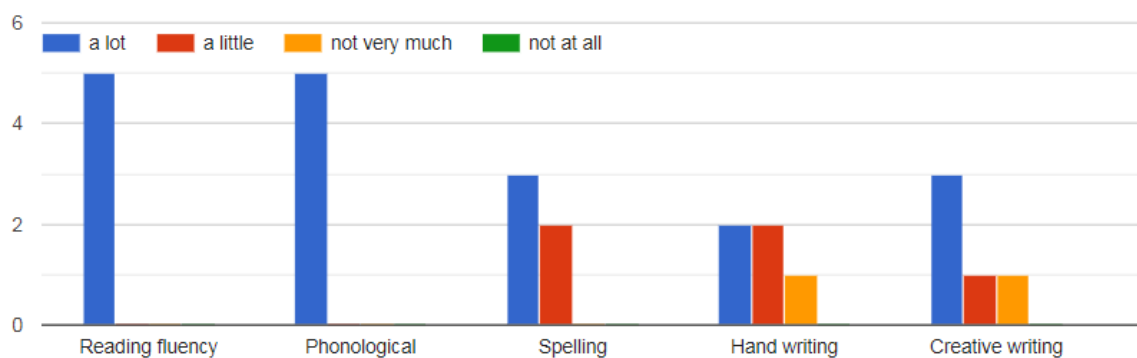
Please rate the negative impact Covid-19 has had on pupils pertaining to the following:

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How do you feel that areas of Literacy were impacted by Covid-19 and school closures?

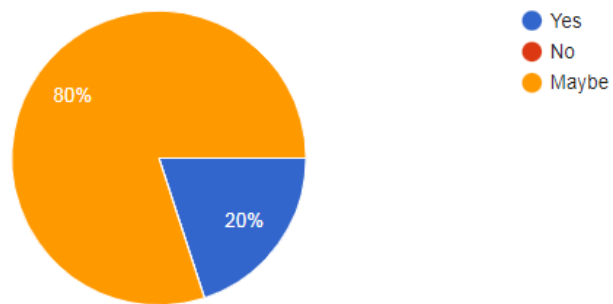
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As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, do pupils present as more anxious?

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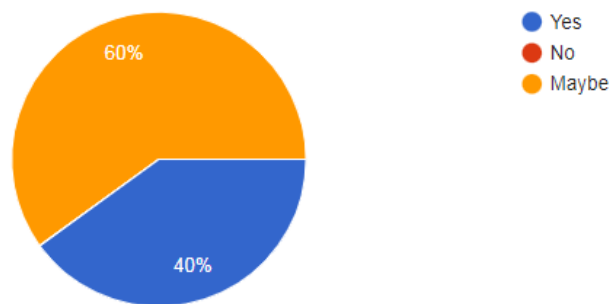
5 responses



Would you have observed that pupils' digital technology skills improved during the Covid-19 pandemic?

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5 responses



Outcome of the survey. (Identifying a focus)

On return from COVID19 school closures, we implemented procedures to help pupils improve their educational experiences, outcomes, motivation and engagement with learning such as broader input of support teaching, changes to timetables, use of CLASS hours, revision of teaching and learning conducted during school closures, continued and enhanced differentiation within the classroom, more active and creative teaching and learning.

Much of this work as well as our on-line teaching and learning were widely praised by those who responded to the surveys. Considering the responses to Google Forms (parents and staff) and the stark reality that all staff respondents felt that pupil literacy had been negatively affected, that parent respondents either felt that pupil wellbeing had been negatively affected or were not sure and by analysing some of the comments from respondents (listed below), all staff, led by the middle-management team decided that the next stage of the SSE process should focus on Literacy (reading fluency and phonological awareness) development within the school.

Whilst pupils surveyed held a confidence in terms of their literacy capabilities, staff were clear that literacy was strongly impacted. Both staff and parents acknowledged that pupils in the middle class levels experienced a drop in the phonological development thus impacting their reading fluency and word recognition skills. This was the area which we chose to target.

Some comments by staff and parents regarding the impact of COVID19 on pupils' well-being.

- Some children find it difficult to regulate their emotions.
- Anxiety seems to be affecting more children per classroom than before covid. I have suggested additional help to more parents, such as Play therapy for their children than I previously would have at the same level.
- More pupils are presenting with anxiety related issues post Covid. For other pupils Covid has had no affect on their well being. Our school has since implemented many activities that promote pupil well-being.
- * is very sociable and I know she missed interacting with her peers.
- * was very anxious after covid
- Would be glad of any extra school support in reading as I feel he is struggling with same since Covid
- I feel mixing with other children and meeting people really benefits my children I think that not mixing and meeting people and not holding conversations with people face to face affected them
- Lack of interaction with school friends was very difficult as she likes social aspect.
- More socially anxious
- * found reading and maths very difficult during Covid but caught up very well with support when she returned to school
- * found Maths and Spelling challenging but caught up quickly on return to school.
- I feel he missed some of the vital phonics and reading skills as he was in Seniors/ first when covid hit

Gathering Evidence.

In term 1, staff were asked to list what was already contributing to Literacy (fluency and phonological awareness) Development in the school. Staff also completed a unit of Sustained Support with PDST facilitator and a whole school plan for Primary Language (English & Gaelge) has been developed. school for staff and pupils. In term 2 of the 2023/24 school year, using Google forms, pupils, parents and staff were surveyed for their opinions on Literacy within the school. The following findings arose from the surveys.

The Main Strengths of the School in Literacy (fluency and phonological awareness) development:

- The school has a newly updated and completed Whole School Primary Language Plan which includes a targeted approach to fluency and phonological awareness. This allows pupils to work as an individual learner at their own pace through a levelled reading programme. This also allows staff to support this pupil learning in a comprehensive and targeted way. Monitoring progress and continuous assessment is central to this approach.
- The school has a large stock of literacy programmes and resources which are used to support and develop literacy skills.
- Staff and pupils have access to up to date IT resources and equipment to aid teaching and learning in literacy.
- The school has a large stock of literacy assessments.
- The school has a good number of support staff and all staff work very well as a team. This will help to implement a specific and targeted approach to literacy.
- Staff are encouraged to access a range of continuing professional development and involvement in professional networks as appropriate
- The school promotes positive relationships between pupils by supporting older pupils to lead in systems such as mentoring, reading buddy systems etc
- Pupils who have learning, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are appropriately supported and their literacy and numeracy is prioritized.
- Staff and parents are well informed of any literacy initiatives ongoing in the school and are very supportive of same.
- Staff and parents' views are accessed and listened to in school planning and policy development and implementation.
- Staff and parents work to support the pupil's individual reading progress at school and at home by following the school's new reading programme in a consistent and methodical way.
- **This reading programme was trialed with Senior Infants & First Class in Term 2 & 3 of 22/23 school year and pupils involved made significant progress during these terms.**

How do we know?

All staff were asked to list instances in the school where/when literacy (fluency and phonological awareness) is supported and developed. Surveys were conducted and all staff, parents and pupils (3rd to 6th class) were asked to answer a range of questions regarding Literacy promotion in the school. The results of these surveys were recorded and analysed by the Middle-management team. These results were discussed in the staff room and at staff meetings. This information was also gleaned from regular communication and feedback between staff, parents and pupils.

This is what we are going to focus on to improve our practice further.

Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools is a framework that provides a shared understanding of what effective and highly effective learning, teaching, leadership and management practices look like in the Irish school system.

It is designed for teachers and for school leaders to use in implementing the most effective and engaging learning and teaching approaches and in enhancing the quality of leadership and management in their schools. It is intended to be used by schools to support their engagement with the six-step school self-evaluation (SSE) process.

It follows on from the 2016 publication of the same name and provides a unified and coherent set of standards for two dimensions of the work of schools:

- Learning and teaching
- Leadership and management

The focus of this Improvement Plan is on the key areas under these dimensions. We have looked at the statements of Effective Practice for all & the Statements for Some and Few. The following Statements will be the focus of our improvement plan to allow pupils to develop these literacy skills are noted as follows:

Dimension: Learning & Teaching: Learner Experiences & Learner Outcomes: 1: 'pupils will engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities' and

1b: 'pupils will demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the curriculum and attain the stated learning outcomes for the term and year.'

This focus will allow pupils to have a (1c:) 'positive image of themselves as **confident and capable** learners and demonstrate this in their approach to their learning.' And also that their (1d:) 'knowledge, skills and understanding of concepts for each area of the curriculum are developed to a very high standard. The values, learning dispositions and attitudes for each curriculum area are promoted appropriately.' (Statements of Highly Effective Practice)

Under the dimension of *Leadership & Management* the following statements will help focus teacher planning and preparation and guide our methodologies to enable us to implement a beneficial reading programme for all pupils:

2: 'The principal, the deputy principal and other leaders in the school **strategically** and efficiently manage curriculum-related planning.'

2a: 'The principal, the deputy principal and other leaders in the school **promote professional learning that is evidence-based and adapted to the identified needs of the school**. They **maximise opportunities to develop teachers' capacity and competence** to improve learning and teaching.
(both statements of highly effective practice).

The work completed on developing a Whole School Plan for Primary Language (English & Gaeilge) will provide a strong foundation to implementing this reading programme efficiently and effectively in our school. This planning and preparatory work will benefit teacher's individual planning and practice whilst also enhancing learning experiences and outcomes for our pupils.



Our School Improvement Plan

Timeframe of this improvement plan is from September 2023 to June 2026

Target Reference	Targets	Actions	Persons / groups responsible	Criteria for success	Progress and adjustments	Targets achieved
1 a-d	Review trial of reading programme SI & 1st (implemented in Term 2 & 3 of 22/23 school year.)	<p>Discuss and review impact of the trial period of levelled reading programme with last year's SI & 1st Class</p> <p>Plan for next stage in implementation for these classes and other classes</p>	<p>N Fenton (K O Sullivan – June 2023) L O Sullivan N Moynihan</p>	<p>Progress gained by pupils in these classes in literacy – fluency and phonological awareness (Teacher tests, observations and literacy assessments e.g. MIST, Drumcondra etc.)</p>		

<p>1 a-d</p>	<p>Extend the implementation of this reading programme to pupils in 2nd to 6th Class (programme contents outlined below this table)</p>	<p>SNA support needed to aid SET team to prep resources</p> <p>Reading folders to be made for each pupil to commence in September</p> <p>Timetables of support staff to include support for reading programme</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<p>Feedback from staff, pupils and parents.</p> <p>Continuous teacher monitoring and observations</p> <p>Tests and checklists</p>		
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2	Communicate with parents re new reading programme and how to support their child's reading at home	<p>Note to parents explaining programme</p> <p>Note to explain what their role is and how they can support</p> <p>Information to parents re school improvement plan and how this will aid pupil progress and learning</p>	<p>L O Sullivan</p> <p>Class teachers during year</p> <p>SNA/ SET during year when communicating with parents re homework tasks and progress</p>	<p>Feedback from staff, pupils and parents.</p> <p>In June 2025, all will be re-surveyed on the specific questions which provided us with issues that we believed required addressing.</p>		
1 a-d	Encourage the full participation of all pupils.	Ensure sufficient planning and consultation between all relevant parties occurs to facilitate the active participation of pupils with additional and/or complex needs	All staff.	<p>Feedback from staff, pupils and parents.</p> <p>In June 2025, all will be re-surveyed on the specific questions which provided us with issues that we believed required addressing.</p>		

2	Inform parents of the improvements noted as a result of this programme being implemented	Send note via Aladdin to all parents explaining Continue to inform parents of these links at the new Junior Infants parents' meetings.	Principal	Feedback from staff, pupils and parents. In June 2025, all will be re-surveyed on the specific questions which provided us with issues that we believed required addressing		
2a	Evaluate and review the effectiveness of the programme by ongoing group and individual assessment	carry out teacher designed tasks and tests teacher observation whole class/ group testing in literacy Standardised Reading Tests as per Assessment Policy	All teachers	Results of assessments and observations of teachers		

The reading programme referred to in our plan is laid out as follows:

S.I. to 3rd Classes: PAT, Toe by Toe, Read Write Inc (Ruth Miskin) Phonics Readers (levelled), PM+ Readers (levelled). Readers completed in alternate terms.

4th to 6th Classes: Toe by Toe & PM+ Readers (Levelled)

J.I. – commence PAT and Read Write Inc. Phonics Readers in Term 3 – acc. To their individual progress in literacy and their reading capabilities at that stage.

This School Self Evaluation & School Improvement Plan was ratified by our Board of Management on 11th June 2024

Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

Principal: _____ Date: _____