

Catherine McAuley

Junior School

DEIS Plan

2025-2028

## **School Shared Vision**

Catherine McAuley Junior School is a school where everyone feels included, safe and respected. We believe in nurturing each pupil's growth and celebrating the joy of learning. Our school is a place where friendships flourish, kindness is shared and every child is encouraged to do their best. Together, we will foster a positive, supportive community of life-long learners.

## **School background**

After many years of planning, the pupils of St. Joseph's National School, Michael St. National School and the Christian Brothers National School, New Ross amalgamated into two co-educational schools-Catherine McAuley Junior School and Edmund Rice Senior School, in September 2016. We moved into the beautiful, new, modern buildings in Castlemoyle, Bawnmore on 2nd February 2017. In September 2017, our school opened a Special Class for children with autism and since then we have opened a further two classes for children with autism. In naming the schools, it is fitting that we remember the extraordinary contribution of Catherine McAuley and Edmund Rice to Irish education over the past two hundred years. They gave up comfortable lives to found the Mercy Sisters and Christian Brothers. The Mercy Sisters have been working in New Ross since 1853 and the Christian Brothers have been working here since 1849. We hope to continue their fine tradition of caring for others. Bunscoil Nic Amhlaidh is the Irish for Catherine McAuley Junior School.

## **Profile of our school**

- Pupils

At present, we have 312 pupils. Of the 312 pupils, 109 or 35% are from an EAL background. Currently we have pupils from 23 different nationalities enrolled in our school.

- Staffing

The teachers on staff in Catherine McAuley Junior School currently include:

- 17 mainstream class teachers
- 12 Learning and Language Support teachers
- 4 Special classes and teachers for children with Autism
- HSCL teacher, Nurture teacher and an administrative principal.

## **Aims of DEIS**

The DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) action plan was launched in 2005 by the Department of Education and Skills. It was based on the findings of the Educational Disadvantage Committee and was grounded in the belief that every child and young person deserves an equal chance to access, participate in and benefit from education.

The aim of the DEIS action plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are met. To this end, it sought a more integrated, coordinated, and effective delivery of the full range of school-based educational inclusion measures. At its core is a standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage, and an integrated School Support Programme (SSP) that brings together and builds upon existing interventions for schools. The interventions include the following:

- Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme
- School Completion Programme (SCP)
- Support Teachers Project
- Giving Children an Even Break
- Breaking the Cycle
- Disadvantaged Area Scheme
- Literacy and Numeracy Schemes

## **DEIS Theme: Literacy**

### **Overall Context**

Literacy is a fundamental set of skills required to derive benefit from education. Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media. Achieving proficiency in literacy is a crucial objective of the Irish education system. Unless children reach adequate literacy standards, they cannot fully benefit from our literacy-based education system. In order to support work in the area, the Department published its National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People. More recently, the Inspectorate published School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines for Primary Schools. There is strong emphasis in the Guidelines on how schools can use the self-evaluation process to ensure better learning outcomes for their pupils. A number of specific measures related to literacy, including intensive professional development programmes for teachers, have been available to schools participating in the DEIS programme. Support to implement specific literacy programmes such as Reading Recovery and First Steps was offered to all DEIS schools.

### **Literacy in the context of our school**

As a DEIS school with a high percentage of EAL pupils, we fully understand the importance of developing the literacy skills of our pupils to support them through the education system and to equip them with the necessary life skills. As a school, we focus on the three mediums of literacy- oral language, reading and writing. We are also committed to integrating different forms of literacy- braille, lámh etc. We want to create enjoyment within literacy, especially through reading and we aim to foster a love of reading in our pupils. As a DEIS school we value the importance of engagement at home and provide opportunity for parents/guardians to engage in literacy with their child through homework.

### **Evidence Gathered**

In Catherine McAuley Junior School, we designed and use a school based independent reading test for junior infant pupils. We use the MIST testing for senior infants. Following review of our previous DEIS plan, we use the MICRA - T Standardised testing for 1<sup>st</sup> classes, along with the Drumcondra Reading test for 2<sup>nd</sup> class. These tests provide a STEN score for each pupil and we feel this is valuable when monitoring progress and comparing each individual pupil to themselves. The results of these tests were gathered and examined for the academic year 2024-2025 and previous years, and used to guide planning.

### **Findings from evidence gathered**

In the school year 2024-2025:

71.5% of pupils in junior infants scored 20 or above in the school designed independent reading test. This average 70% over the three years of our previous plan

62% of pupils in senior infants were above the cut off point in the written vocabulary section of the MIST test. The written vocabulary section of the MIST test was identified as the area that our pupils found most challenging and where average scores were below the other sections of the test. This percentage averaged 65% over the three years of our previous plan.

81% of pupils in 1<sup>st</sup> class scored a STEN of 5 or above, in the MICRA-T reading test. In the three years of our previous DEIS plan, on average 75% of 1<sup>st</sup> class pupils achieved approaching criterion or reached criterion in the Drumcondra test. This % will be used as a base figure for 1<sup>st</sup> class STEN scores within this plan.

50% of pupils in 2<sup>nd</sup> class scored a STEN of 5 or above in the Drumcondra reading test.

### **DEIS Theme: Literacy**

#### **Evidence/ Findings**

In Catherine McAuley Junior School, we use the MICRA-T testing for 1<sup>st</sup> class and the Drumcondra reading test for 2<sup>nd</sup> classes. We use the MIST testing for senior infants and an independent reading test for junior infants

In the school year 2024-2025,

71.5% of pupils in junior infants scored 20 or above in the school designed independent reading test. This average was 70% over the three years of our previous plan

62% of pupils in senior infants were above the cut off point in the written vocabulary section of the MIST test. This percentage averaged 65% over the three years of our previous plan

81% of pupils in 1<sup>st</sup> class scored a STEN of 5 or above, in the MICRA-T reading test. In the three years of our previous DEIS plan, on average 75% of 1<sup>st</sup> class pupils achieved approaching criterion or reached criterion in the Drumcondra test. This % will be used as a base figure for 1<sup>st</sup> class STEN scores within this plan.

50% of pupils in 2<sup>nd</sup> class scored a STEN of 5 or above in the Drumcondra reading test

#### **Literacy Target 1 and 2 (junior infants):**

Target 1: Maintain the percentage of junior infants' pupils who score 20 or above in the independent reading test at or above a 70% average over the duration of this plan

Target 2: 50% or more of the pupils who scored below 20 in the junior infants independent reading test will score 20 or above when retested in October of senior infants.

#### **Actions to address target 1/2:**

**PM words-** PM (taken from PM readers) words will be taught discreetly by class teachers and SET teachers working in junior infants throughout the year.

**Focus on sounds:** Focus in the junior infants will be on the 26 sounds as well as ch, sh and th.

**Heggerty Phonemic Awareness programme in junior infants:** The Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum is a systematic program of daily lesson plans that provide a high level of explicit modelling and student engagement. Each level of the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum focuses on six to eight phonemic awareness skills, along with additional activities to develop letter and sound recognition, introduce the phoneme-grapheme connection and extended language awareness.

**UFLI Foundation for Phonics in junior infants:** This is an explicit and systematic phonics program that introduces students to the foundational reading skills necessary for proficient reading. Foundations follows a carefully developed scope and sequence designed to ensure that students systematically acquire each skill needed and learn to apply each skill with automaticity and confidence. This is supplemented with the use of **Jolly Phonics**.

**Testing schedule:** Our school testing schedule will reflect the requirement to retest pupils in senior infants, who were below the cut off point in the junior infants independent reading test.

**Literacy target 3 and 4 (senior infants):**

**Target 3:** Maintain the % of senior infant pupils who score above the cut off point in the written vocabulary section of the MIST test at or above the 65% average, over the duration of this plan

**Target 4:** 50% or more of senior infant pupils who did not reach the cut of point in the written vocabulary section of the MIST test will do so when retested in June of the same year.

**Actions to address target 3/4:**

**Dictation sentences:** During Literacy Lift Off, dictation sentences will be a primary focus in the writing station for senior infants. Dictation can aid in the development of writing skills for the pupils.

**PAT programme:** Senior infant classes will participate in writing stations using the PAT programme. This will help the children to write regular single syllable words.

**PM Words:** Banks of PM words (from PM readers) will be taught in senior infants throughout the year. The children will regularly practice writing these words and using them as part of dictation sentences.

**Testing schedule:** Our school testing schedule will reflect the requirement to retest senior infants pupils in June, who were below the cut off point in the written vocabulary section of the MIST testing in February/March.

**Literacy target 5 and 6 (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes)**

**Literacy target 5:** The % of 1<sup>st</sup> class pupils achieving a STEN 5 or more will be at or above a 75% average, over the duration of this plan.

**Literacy target 6:** To maintain the % of pupils scoring a STEN 5 or above as they progress from 1<sup>st</sup> class to 2<sup>nd</sup> class, for each year of the plan.

**Actions to address target 5 and 6:**

**Literacy Lift Off-** A continuous schedule of LLO will be provided for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes. In LLO the pupils work in small groups at reading, writing, phonics and grammar at their own level. The aim is to have LLO for three sessions per week and to aim for a full hour for each session. Cloze exercises will become part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> class LLO plan to develop the pupil's vocabulary.

**Benchmarking:** All pupils in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class will be benchmarked to their reading level. This is to ensure that they are reading at an appropriate level and that groups for LLO are accurate.

**High achievers group:** High achievers from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes will be identified from the NRIT testing (completed in November). This group will work for a 1 hour session per week where they will be challenged at their own level.

**Continuous testing schedule:** A testing schedule will be followed within the school and pupils experiencing difficulties with areas of literacy will be identified.

**SET hours:** SET hours will be given to the pupils who are most in need. Those pupils who are experiencing challenges with literacy will be recommended for support. The results of testing will also be factored in to deciding on the pupils who require literacy support.

**Dictionary/Thesaurus work:** Extra emphasis will be placed on dictionary and thesaurus work, especially in 2<sup>nd</sup> class. This will support our pupils in developing their vocabulary and comprehension.

**Comprehension:** comprehensions will be created for each PM level reader, with the intention of developing the pupil's comprehension strategies.

**DEAR Time:** DEAR time will become a focus of the whole school and the pupils will have opportunity to read quietly throughout the school week. This will help to foster a love of reading and encourage pupils to read books of interest to them.

**Shared Reading:** Shared reading schedules will be put in place throughout the year. This will involve 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes reading to the infant classes and discussing their books with them. Shared reading will also be planned in partnership with the senior school.

**Focus on story time in all classes:** More emphasis will be placed on teachers reading or playing stories to their class. This can be done at snack time or at different times throughout the school day.

**Celebration of events:** Events such as World Book Day will be included in the school calendar.

**Monitoring:**

- Our school testing schedule will be reviewed each year.
- All standardised tests scores will be reviewed and compared to previous results, in order to monitor progress.

## **DEIS Theme: Numeracy**

### **Overall context**

Numeracy is an important element of the DEIS action plan. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategy's definition of numeracy encompasses the ability to use mathematical understanding and skills to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-day living. Thus, numeracy is seen not only as relevant to the Mathematics curriculum, but also as having a focus across the curriculum. Supports to improve numeracy skills available to schools participating in DEIS include Maths Recovery and Ready, Set, Go Maths. These programmes provide intensive and early intervention support to strengthen pupils' grasp of numeracy. Maths for Fun, implemented through the HSCL scheme, is also available to schools participating in DEIS.

### **Numeracy in the context of our school**

In Catherine McAuley junior school we see the promotion and development of Numeracy as crucial to developing life-long mathematical skills, that the children can use in everyday activities. We want children to see and experience Maths in the real world and utilise their knowledge and skills through their interaction with Maths during their everyday activities. We want the children to start thinking more critically and problem solve for themselves, promoting their self-belief in doing so. We want to completely remove the stigma around Maths right from the beginning of the children's learning journey during these critical early years. Maths is fun and we want the children to experience this by ensuring they can learn and develop numeracy knowledge and skills through playful and fun learning activities and experiences. We believe all children should experience achievement and success. We want to meet children at their current stage of learning and ensure they have opportunities to explore numeracy at their current level with ample opportunities to be challenged and encouraged whatever their stage of learning.

### **Evidence Gathered**

In Catherine McAuley Junior School, we were using the Drumcondra Mathematics Standardised testing for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes. However, the testing for 1<sup>st</sup> class was not providing a STEN score for pupils. Therefore, in order to measure the progress of our pupils, it was decided to complete the SIGMA-T testing in 1<sup>st</sup> class. This would also be trialled in 2<sup>nd</sup> class, along with the Drumcondra Maths testing. The results of these tests were gathered and examined for the years 2024-2025. As well as providing STEN scores this testing also highlighted the topics causing most concern to our pupils. This aligned with the test scores from previous years as well as the feedback from a parental survey who were asked to list the topics that their child found most challenging.

**Findings from Evidence gathered**

In the school year 2024-2025, 76.5% of our pupils in 1<sup>st</sup> class scored a STEN of 5 or above in the SIGMA-T maths standardised test. This is over three quarters of pupils. In the three years of our previous DEIS plan, on average 75% of 1<sup>st</sup> class pupils achieved approaching criterion or reached criterion in the Drumcondra test. This % will be used as a base figure for 1<sup>st</sup> class STEN scores within this plan.

In the school year 2024-2025, 51.4% of pupils in 2<sup>nd</sup> class scored a STEN of 5 or above in the Drumcondra standardised testing.

From inputting the scores of each question in the standardised testing, the areas of problem solving was identified as a skill that was causing difficulty for our pupils. In the 1<sup>st</sup> class testing 2024-2025, only 37.5% of word problems were solved correctly, throughout the whole year group.

### DEIS Theme: Numeracy

**Evidence/ Findings:**

76.5 of pupils in 1<sup>st</sup> class achieved a STEN of 5 or above in the school year 2024-2025. In the three years of our previous DEIS plan, on average 75% of 1<sup>st</sup> class pupils achieved approaching criterion or reached criterion in the Drumcondra test. This % will be used as a base figure for 1<sup>st</sup> class STEN scores within this plan.

In the same school year 51.4% of pupils in 2<sup>nd</sup> class scored a STEN 5 or above in the Drumcondra maths standardised testing. Problem solving was identified as the area causing significant difficulty for our pupils and the scores in this area are well below the other skills in maths. This aligns with the high percentage of EAL pupils enrolled in our school.

**Numeracy target 1:** The % of pupils in 1<sup>st</sup> class scoring a STEN of 5 or above in their standardised testing will be at or above a 75% average, over the duration of this plan.

**Numeracy target 2:** To maintain the % of pupils scoring a STEN of 5 or above, as they progress from 1<sup>st</sup> class to 2<sup>nd</sup> class.

**Actions to address numeracy target 1 and 2:**

**Maths Recovery:** Maths Recovery will be timetabled for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes for 1 hour per week, in terms 1, 2 and 3. This will consist of the pupils working on Maths topics in small groups. This provides the pupils with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of specific topics and lessons are completed using a hands on approach with concrete materials.

**Consistent numeracy support in classes:** Numeracy support will be provided in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes on a consistent basis. This will be used as co-teaching for hands on lessons and withdrawal for pupils who are not working at the class level. The pupils in need of additional support will be identified from the standardised test scores and from the school assessment schedule in numeracy.

**Maths resources:** Numeracy resources will be continually updated and stored in the Maths room. Resources will be provided for classes and added to on a regular basis to ensure pupils have adequate resources to support their numeracy needs. Resources will also be extended for each classroom, including cubes, 3d shapes, clocks and tens/units.

**Discretionary time for numeracy:** As a DEIS 1 school, it was decided to use our discretionary time between numeracy and literacy. Each class will focus on numeracy for additional time each week.

**Numicon for the infant classes:** A full rollout of numicon for use in junior and senior infant classes, to assist pupils with an understanding of number from an infant level.

**Continuous Maths test schedule:** A school testing/assessment schedule is in place in the school to monitor progress throughout the school year. This highlights the topics that pupils find challenging and require more time on. It also highlights the pupils who may require additional support in Maths. A school based test has been designed for junior and senior infants, based on the new maths curriculum. The results of these tests will be analysed to identify pupils who may fall into the bracket of below STEN 5 as they progress to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes, with a view to providing numeracy support as necessary.

**Numeracy target 3:** To increase the average scores in word problem solving skills as the pupils progress from 1<sup>st</sup> class to 2<sup>nd</sup> class

**Actions to address numeracy target 3:**

**School wall for Maths challenge:** An area of the school will be identified and used as a Maths wall. Maths challenges and problem solving activities will be updated and displayed throughout the school year for classes and pupils to solve.

**Maths language:** As a DEIS school with a high percentage of EAL pupils, we will focus on developing Maths language and create word walls in classrooms to support this. Common Maths language will be identified from pupil activities and resource textbooks.

**Monitoring:**

- Our school testing schedule will be reviewed each year.
- All standardised tests scores will be reviewed and compared to previous results, in order to monitor progress.
- Following the standardised testing, the answers to each question will be recorded. This will provide a breakdown of results and show the average scores in each numeracy topic
- During Maths Recovery, each teacher will record the progress of their groups. This will help to identify the challenges faced by pupils.
- Continuous monitoring of testing will take place during the school year to identify areas that are causing concern. This will include class based, school based and standardised testing.

## **DEIS Theme: Attendance**

### **Overall Context**

The DEIS planning process requires schools to set targets for improved attendance rates. It also requires primary schools to select and implement strategies that will allow them to achieve these targets. All schools are cognisant of the fact that overall pupil attainment and learning outcomes cannot improve if absenteeism remains problematic. The most recent national analysis of attendance figures, established that the average number of pupils per school missing 20 days or more is roughly twice as high in DEIS schools, as compared to other urban schools. For this reason, attendance is a key part of the DEIS planning process and many of the resources and services available to DEIS schools relate to attendance in some way.

### **Attendance in the context of our school**

At Catherine McAuley Junior school, we understand the importance of positive attendance for pupil attainment and are aware of how it relates to and impacts on the other DEIS themes. As a junior school, we believe that good attendance instils good habits early for our pupils and it allows them to foster social skills and friendships. It also enhances emotional well-being through stability and routine and ensures that our pupils feel secure in their school, which supports retention. We also believe that positive attendance supports our pupils in building early literacy and numeracy skills through consistent learning. We place significant effort and importance on monitoring and supporting pupils with their attendance, in order for them to reach their full potential and to develop lifelong skills.

### **Evidence Gathered**

Our school attendance is recorded through Aladdin, the computer-based admin system. Class teachers record their pupil's attendance daily and also record the minutes late of late arrivals and the minutes of early leavers. The Aladdin system provides detailed statistics of school attendance and this was used to gather evidence in relation to overall attendance. The system was also used to analyse late arrivals at school. This issue is continually discussed at staff meetings and ISM meetings and teachers felt that a lot of pupils were missing valuable learning time in the mornings. The number of pupils arriving late to school was recorded throughout the course of our previous DEIS plan and it remains an area for improvement. Pupils in attendance at 8.45am were recorded by each class on a google document and the figures were then compared to overall class attendance on the same day. Percentages were then established on a whole school basis.

### **Findings from evidence**

Our overall attendance has improved steadily over the last 3 years. The base figure used for school improvement in our previous DEIS plan was 87.8%, taken from statistics in the school year 2022-2023, as the statistics from 2021-2022 were impacted by Covid-19. Attendance increased to

89.2% in 2023-2024 and to 91.2% in the school year 2024-2025. From tracking the late arrivals, it was found that 25% of pupils were still arriving after 8.45am, this figure excluded the bus children.

**DEIS Theme: Attendance**

**Evidence/Findings**

Attendance was 87.8% in the school year 2021-2023, 89.2% in the school year 2023-2024 and 91.1% in the school year 2024-2025.

25% of pupils were arriving late for school.

**Attendance Target 1:** To maintain overall school attendance over 90%, throughout the period of the DEIS plan

**Actions to address target 1**

**Continued monitoring of Alaidin:** The school principal, HSCL teacher and class teachers will continue to monitor attendance on a regular basis. Any trends in relation to attendance are noted. HSCL teacher in daily contact with priority families

**Incentives for attendance:** At regular intervals during the school year, prizes and rewards will be offered to pupils for good and improving attendance throughout the school.

**Incentives for targeted children:** Reward charts and other systems will be put in place for pupils who are noted as having particular difficulty with attendance.

**Prizes for parents:** In Catherine McAuley school, as a junior school, it is viewed that pupils are dependent on parents to get to school. At intervals during the year, parents will be entered into a raffle for each day that their child attends school. Local businesses will be contacted about sponsoring prizes.

**Regular reminders sent to parents about attendance:** During the school year, regular reminders will be sent to parents as a reminder on the importance of attending school. School dojo, Alaidin, newsletters etc will be used as a means of communicating the message to parents/guardians.

**Mindfulness Mondays:** the first Monday of every month will be mindful Monday in our school. The pupils will not have any written homework and will be encouraged to participate in mindful activities instead. Activities will also take place during the school day. Monday is considered as the most challenging day for pupils to attend school, after the routine of the weekend. The mindful Mondays will be used to encourage children to attend.

**System for pupils who miss 5, 10, 20 days:** HSCL teacher has a system in place to make contact with the parents of children who are absent for more than 5 days.

**Regular check ins-** Year group leaders will check in with each class regularly, praising those who are in school and the pupils who are in school for the full week.

**Attendance target 2:** To reduce the number of pupils arriving late to school by 2%, year on year, for the duration of the plan

**Actions to address target 2.**

**Be on time for quarter to nine:** All pupils who arrive to school on time will be entered into a raffle for prizes (run at different intervals throughout the year). Wrist bands and slogans to match.

**Meet and greet at the school gate to 8.45am:** Mrs Nolan will meet and greet pupils and parents at the school gate up until 8.45am. This will stop at 8.45am to encourage pupils to arrive on time.

**Amelia (therapy dog) meet and greet:** Amelia will be in the foyer/yard to greet pupils up to 8.45am. Pupils in school on time will have an opportunity to see and greet Amelia in the mornings.

**Aladdin Roll Call-** minutes of late arrivals to be recorded by class teachers daily.

**Morning yard:** School yard will be supervised each morning from 8.30am. Pupils have the opportunity to meet their friends and play at this time. This is established to encourage children to arrive into school before 8.45am.

**Weekly assembly:** Whole school assembly on Mondays at 9am to encourage on time arrival.

**Monitoring:**

- Attendance will be monitored and reviewed on Aladdin on an ongoing basis.
- HSCL teacher will continually monitor attendance and contact parents when required.
- Arrival times of pupils to school will be recorded at regular intervals throughout the school year.
- Regular reminders will be sent on Aladdin and School Dojo regarding school start time and the importance of pupils attending consistently.

## **DEIS Theme: Partnerships with parents and others**

### **Overall Context**

Schools supported through the DEIS action plan are expected to develop partnerships with parents and with the community. They are also required to develop links with a range of external agencies in order to support pupils to remain in school and to experience success. The findings from the evaluations in these areas were collated under the heading of partnership with parents and others. The development and fostering of effective links with parents and the local community are critical aspects of the DEIS planning process. The role of the HSCL coordinator and of SCP personnel is important in establishing, developing and fostering effective links between the school, the home and the local community.

### **Partnerships in the context of our school**

In Catherine McAuley Junior School, we believe that parents are the most important people in their children's early lives. By working together in partnership, parents and educators can enhance our children's learning and development in a supportive way. Our school is at the centre of our parent's community and we are a valuable link between them and wider services in the community. We also recognise and respect our diverse school population and aim to nurture and support our relationships with parents in an inclusive and nurturing way through our actions and initiatives as part of the DEIS Plan. Also, as a sister school of the Edmund Rice Senior School we value partnerships with other local schools and local organisations as important to the development and progression of our children.

### **Evidence Gathered**

A detailed survey was distributed to parents to establish the number of families involved in school initiatives. The survey was also used to find the thoughts of parents on how improvement can be made within our school and how home/school links can be developed further. Through discussions with staff, we were able to establish the number of initiatives undertaken in partnership with the senior school and with other local schools. Records are taken by our HSCL teacher with the names and contact details of parents/guardians attending courses and activities organised by HSCL. Records are also taken of the active members on the parent's association and Aladdin was analysed to establish the percentage of EAL families within our school community

**Findings from evidence gathered**

Having had no active parent's association since before COVID 19, the parent's association is now up and running.

61 parents/guardians were involved in classes/courses organised by HSCL in the school year 2024-2025. The breakdown of this number was 10 parents involved in the cluster group with other local schools, 19 parents at the nurture Christmas art event and 32 parents attended the coffee mornings. 34% of parents have been involved in school initiatives/activities with the pupils (maths for fun, GAA nursery and stay and play). Currently, we are participating in 3 initiatives in conjunction with the Edmund Rice senior school (2<sup>nd</sup> class transition programme, shared reading activities and active schools week activities) and 2 initiatives with other local schools- Kennedy College (Irish dancing during Seachtain na Gaeilge) and Cushinstown N.S (GAA blitz)

## DEIS Theme: Partnerships

### **Evidence/Findings**

Our parent's association is active, with 5 current members. Currently, there is 1 EAL parent on P.A (20%)

61 parents participated in HSCL classes/courses in the school year 2024-2025

34% of parents have participated in school activities with the pupils.

There are 3 initiatives currently ongoing in partnership with the senior school and 2 initiatives with other local schools- Kennedy College and Cushinstown N.S.

### **Partnerships target 1 and 2:**

To increase the number of parents/guardians in the parent's association by 3 each year, for the duration of the plan

To increase the number of EAL parents on the parent's association by 1 each year, for the duration of the plan to mirror the percentage of EAL families in our school.

### **Actions to address target 1**

**Introductory meetings:** Meetings will be arranged for any parents who are interested in joining the parent association. Information will be provided on the involvement and expectations of the role (focus on parents of junior infants and new enrolments).

**Further meetings:** Regular follow on meetings will be scheduled to create interest amongst the parents and increase involvement in parent led activities.

**Seek new members regularly:** Reminders will be sent regarding activities and the importance of a working parent association. There will be an ongoing opportunity for parents to join the parent association.

**Junior infants meeting:** Our principal and HSCL teacher will meeting individually with the parents/guardians of incoming pupils. From this, parents/guardians will be identified and approached with regard to joining the P.A.

**Seek new members regularly:** Reminders will be sent regarding activities and the importance of a working parent association. There will be an ongoing opportunity for parents to join the parent association.

**Partnerships target 2:** To increase the number of parents attending courses organised by the HSCL by 6 each year

**Actions to address target 2**

**Specialised classes for parents and families:** HSCL will organise classes and courses for the parents that are of interest to the parents. Surveys and questionnaires will be created to establish the areas of interest for the parents.

**Classes and courses in the evenings:** Courses will be organised for the evening times for parents, where more parents may be available. Keep Fit for parents which is planned to start is an example of this.

**Utilise parents with specific skills:** Parents with specific skills and expertise will be identified and invited into the school to share their skills with other parents.

**Partnerships target 3:** Maintain parental involvement in school initiatives above 33% for the duration of the plan.

**Actions to address target 3**

**Stay and Play:** Stay and Play will be organised in junior infants, where parents visit the classes and play games with their children.

**Maths for Fun:** Maths for Fun will take place for a 6 week block for parents of pupils in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class. Maths for Fun is a parental involvement programme where parents visit the school to play board games with groups of children.

**Involvement of Nurture parents:** The parents of the pupils attending the nurture room will be invited into the school to work on activities with the children.

**GAA coaching:** Parents will be invited to participate in GAA coaching for the infant classes for a block of Wednesdays. This will link to the nursery programme in the local club Geraldine O'Hanrahans.

**Fundraising events:** Parents and guardian will be encouraged to assist with fundraising events in the school. Where possible, these events will be organised outside of school time to encourage the involvement of extra parents who have work commitments.

**School events:** Events involving the whole school community, such as the family fun day and Christmas around the world event will become a regular part of the school calendar.

**Communication:** School management and staff will be in regular communication with parents, providing details of events and initiatives that they can be involved in. Various communication methods will be used such as newsletters, class dojo and Aladdin connect.

**EAL Families:** EAL parents who do not speak English will be signposted to language classes organised by the WWETB.

**Partnerships target 4:** To increase initiatives undertaken in partnership with the senior school by 1 each year and to increase initiatives undertaken in partnership with other local schools by 1 each year , over the 3 year plan

#### **Actions to address target 4**

**Shared Reading:** Continue a shared reading rota between classes in the two schools. Classes will be paired and visit each other to read together. The shared reading will commence as part of World Book Day and continue into a regular activity.

**Active Schools:** Both schools will continue to join together for activities as part of the active week programme.

**Transition Programme:** The transition programme for our 2<sup>nd</sup> class pupils who are moving to the senior school will be developed further.

**Communication:** A shared google drive will be used to transfer information between schools. Also, as part of Croke Park hours, the ISM's in both schools will meet to suggest possible initiatives that can be developed between the schools.

**Irish dancing:** As part of Seachtain na Gaeilge, students from Kennedy college will visit our school and participate in Irish dancing lessons with our pupils.

**GAA blitz:** A GAA blitz for 2<sup>nd</sup> class boys and girls with Cushinstown N.S will become part of the school calendar and continue to be organised in term 3

**Further initiatives:** Further ideas will be discussed on an ongoing basis in regard to activities with the senior school and other local schools in the area

**Monitoring:**

- Surveys and questionnaires will be carried out to establish the up to date involvement of parents in our school.
- Records will be taken of the parents who participate in school activities, such as Maths for Fun and Stay and Play.
- Records will be taken of the parents involved in classes/ courses organised by HSCL.

## **DEIS Theme: Retention**

### **Overall Context**

The theme of retention focuses on the importance of keeping children in school, identifying those at risk of early leaving, and taking action to reduce or eliminate factors that cause students to drop out. Ireland has high student retention rates that compare well with those in other European countries. The latest figures show that the average retention rate for DEIS post-primary schools continues to increase. The retention-to-Leaving Certificate figure in DEIS schools for students who entered post-primary school in 2001 was 68.2%; the comparable figure for the students that entered post-primary school in 2007 is 80.4%. While this is a very significant improvement, it is worth noting that the retention figure in non DEIS schools for the 2007-entry cohort is 92.6%. For primary schools, retaining pupils in school is not as problematic. However, primary schools should identify those pupils who are at risk of leaving school early, and take action to eliminate the factors that cause them to drop out.

### **Retention in the context of our school**

Catherine McAuley is Junior School with classes from junior infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> class. As a junior school, our pupils are experiencing their initial school years in our care. Therefore, it was decided that retention should be based on the happiness and wellbeing of the children and allowing them to gain and develop positive experiences and attitudes towards school life. In Catherine McAuley Junior School we aim to create an accepting warm nurturing environment for both the children and their parents in our school. We aim to create a welcoming, happy and inclusive atmosphere from the moment the children arrive at the school gate. The 6 principles of Nurture guide the working, core values and our overall feeling/atmosphere in our school. The aim is that this will help to prepare our pupils for school life in the future, help them to reach their full potential and lead to the successful retention of our pupils in future years, as they progress through school levels.

### **Evidence Gathered:**

Evidence was gathered using a happy/unhappy at school exercise with the pupils. 282 pupils completed the activity. In addition to this, my thoughts about school checklist was completed with pupils on a 1:1 basis to establish pupil interests and concerns in further detail. The number of children in our school who have school avoidance issues and continuous difficulties in coming to school each morning were identified and recorded. This evidence was gathered through meetings and discussions between the school principal, HSCL teacher, nurture teacher, class teachers and support staff in our school. Behaviours at the school gate and on entrance to classes in the mornings were also noted and a list of children having difficulty coming into school was recorded.

### Findings from evidence gathered

13% of children in our school say that they are unhappy in school. The breakdown of this is 10% in junior infants, 10% in senior infants, 17% in first class and 14% in 2<sup>nd</sup> class

The findings also show that we currently have 10 children experiencing difficulties coming into school in the morning.

#### DEIS Theme: Retention

##### Evidence/ Findings:

13% of children in our school say that they are unhappy in school. The breakdown of this is 10% in junior infants, 19% in senior infants, 17% in first class and 14% in 2<sup>nd</sup> class

**Retention target 1:** To reduce the number of children who say they are unhappy in school by 2% each year, for the 3-year period

**Retention target 2:** To reduce the number of children having school avoidance issues by 2 each year, for the next 3 years

##### Actions:

**Regulation breaks and activities for pupils during the school-** regulation breaks and activities will continue to be provided and scheduled for children who require a break from the classroom. Whole class breaks are also used by teachers regularly.

**Extra-curricular activities organised for pupils-** GAA provided from Wexford GAA coach and rugby through IRFU coach, timetabled through the classes. GAA coaching provided by teachers after school in terms 2 and 3. Other activities such as swimming, gymnastics and dance are also scheduled at intervals during the school year. Lego and coding club are also organised and run for 2<sup>nd</sup> classes after school. It is hoped that these activities will add to the enjoyment of pupils and that interesting activities are provided to meet the needs of all pupils. Activities are discussed by school staff regularly to ensure balance and to ensure that all class groupings have the opportunity to participate.

**Friendship and wellbeing weeks scheduled into the school calendar-** as well as ongoing teaching and learning in regard to friendship and wellbeing through the SPHE programme, it is hoped that these specific weeks highlight the significance of these areas throughout the school and help our pupils to enjoy school, through friendships. Staff members from all class levels form committees for these areas and meet to discuss activities which would benefit the pupils in our school.

**Prizes and Rewards:** Rewards such as homework passes and small prizes are awarded in classes throughout the school. They are given for table of the week, for pupils trying their best etc. Class teachers have their individual systems in place with the idea that as the pupils work towards rewards their enjoyment and engagement in school develops.

**Nurture Room established in the school-** Ms Delaney is the Nurture Room teacher. Soft starts will be provided for pupils having school avoidance issues. This will extend to classrooms also where the school day will begin with play or other enjoyable activities.

**Care Team within the school:** The care team meet monthly. Teachers can refer pupils to the care team if they are displaying noticeable concerns in the class. These concerns include pupils finding it difficult to come into school in the morning and pupils showing signs of unhappiness. If necessary, the care team put strategies in place to support each individual pupil.

**School completion staff member working in the school-** Kate Russell is the school's designated school completion worker. The School Completion Programme can provide a range of supports to your child/young person during school, after school and during school holidays to address any issues related to retention and happiness in school.

**Mindfulness activities and homework-** On the first Monday of each month, the whole school will participate in mindfulness Monday. Mindful activities are performed in each class. The pupils have no written homework on this night and are asked to participate in a mindful activity at home. The aim of this is to promote the wellbeing of our pupils, to provide a break from the routine of homework and provide pupils with strategies to cope in difficult situations.

**Gardening Group activities-** A parent and adult body operate a gardening group on the school grounds. The plan is for classes and targeted children to join activities with the group and in the garden.

**Jobs-** Early morning jobs are provided for the pupils with avoidance issues. These can be regular and used to provide incentive for the pupil to come into school.

**Breakfast club-** breakfast is provided in all classes each morning. This is an opportunity for the children to socialise and chat and is viewed as a method of encouraging pupils to come into school and to increase happiness.

**School Therapy dog-** The school were successful in applying for a therapy dog from the My Canine Companion Programme. Amelia began working in our school in September 2024. Amelia will work in our school to support pupils in the areas of wellbeing, mental health, anxiety, absenteeism, staff and student morale

**Monitoring:**

- Each term the pupils will complete the happy/unhappy checklist and the progress will be monitored.
- Each school term, the principal, HSCL teacher and other staff involved will discuss and record the children experiencing school avoidance issue.
- A parent survey will be sent yearly and the evidence examined in order to identify changes in parent's thoughts about school.

## **DEIS Theme: Transitions**

### **Overall context**

Schools play an important role in influencing pupils progression to higher and further education. Successful progression of pupils in the education system, therefore, are inextricably linked with the concept of Lifelong Learning. As outlined in the DEIS action plan, transition relates to ensuring pupils make a successful progression from one school level to the next; either from junior primary to senior primary schools or from primary to post-primary schools.

For most primary schools, transitioning through primary levels and onto second level are not problematic and therefore action planning for improvement in these areas may not be a central part of the school's DEIS planning process. However, a positive experience of primary school is key to ensuring transitions to second level. Transitions is closely linked to retention and it is hoped that the successful progression of pupils will lead to high levels of retention to the end of the senior cycle.

### **School context**

Catherine McAuley Junior School is a sister school of the Edmund Rice Senior School. The vast majority of our pupil's transition to the senior school following the completion of 2<sup>nd</sup> class. Our incoming pupils transition from a preschool on site as well as a number of other preschools throughout the town. In our school we are committed to developing transitions opportunities for pupils so they will feel safe, happy and secure when starting in our school and when moving onto 3<sup>rd</sup> class. We also value transitions within our school as important to our pupil's development. We are committed to developing activities and actions to assist pupils with the transition from Glaisin (special classes) to mainstream, from year group to year group and new pupils transitioning from other schools.

### **Evidence Gathered:**

A survey and questionnaire was distributed to 2<sup>nd</sup> class, asking them their opinions and thoughts on how they are prepared for and transition to 3<sup>rd</sup> class. Parents of junior infants were also asked how their child was supported through the transition from pre-school. Meetings and discussions took place between our school and the senior school and local pre-schools to identify how we support the transitions of our pupils. Data from Aladdin and enrolment forms were analysed to identify where our pupils transition to in 2<sup>nd</sup> class and the pre-schools where our junior infants transition from. Our principal and HSCL teacher met individually with the parents of incoming junior infants to gain a knowledge of each pupil and how best to support them in their transition to our school. This information was used when class lists/groupings were devised for junior infants.

## Findings from evidence gathered

The vast majority (almost 100%) of our pupil's transition to the Edmund Rice senior school following 2<sup>nd</sup> class. The pre-school on site transition a high percentage of their pupils to our school and junior infants also enrol from other pre-schools in New Ross town. From the survey of 2<sup>nd</sup> class pupils, 86.8% of pupils felt that they were ready and prepared for the transition to 3<sup>rd</sup> class. From recordings and monitoring of our Glaisin classes 12/18 or 66% of pupil's transition from Glaisin to mainstream class.

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**Retention target 1:** Continue to support parents/guardians and pupils through the transition process from pre-school to our primary school

#### Actions to address target 1:

**School open day and evening for incoming junior infants and parents:** In January of each year, a school open day and evening will be organised. This is for all parents and guardians in our school, but it is specifically organised for the parents/guardians of incoming junior infants. Parents/guardians will have an opportunity to visit the school, observe activities in the classrooms, examine the facilities and talk to teachers and other staff members.

**Information meeting for the parents/guardians of incoming junior infants:** In term 3 of each year, an information meeting will take place for the parents/guardians of the incoming junior infants. Specific information will be shared by the school principal and other staff members on how children can prepare for the successful transition to primary school.

**HSCL (Ms Fitzpatrick) and principal (Mrs Nolan) to visit/meet with local pre-schools:** Visiting the local pre-school provides relevant information to be shared and helps our school support children in their transition to primary school.

**Meetings arranged between pre-school teachers and junior infant teachers:** Either face to face or through phone calls, our junior infants teachers will discuss the strengths and needs of each child with their pre-school teachers.

**HSCL teacher (Ms Fitzpatrick and school principal (Mrs Nolan) to meet individually with the parents/guardians of the incoming junior infants in June:** Our principal and HSCL teacher will meet with the parents of each junior infant pupil, to offer support and advise, to assist in the transition of their child to junior infants

**Welcome pack designed and distributed to incoming infants:** In term 3, the incoming junior infants for September will receive a welcome pack with activities to complete.

**June meetings:** parents and incoming junior infants can visit the school and classrooms in June. They will meet staff of the school and the children play in the room. Two sessions are offered to each family

**September coffee morning:** A coffee morning is arranged by HSCL for the parents of junior infants.

**Stay and play:** During the year junior infant parents have the opportunity to visit their child's class and participate in stay and play, as per timetable.

**Transition target 2:** Continue to support pupils with the transition from our school to the senior school. Target for 85% of 2<sup>nd</sup> class pupils to feel that they are ready and prepared for the transition to the senior school by the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> class, year on year.

**Actions to address target 2:**

**Transition programme in place for 2<sup>nd</sup> class children:** A transition plan is in place for our 2<sup>nd</sup> class pupils. This is a guide of activities for the pupils to complete to prepare themselves for the move to 3<sup>rd</sup> class and a new school. The transition plan will be developed and updated each year.

**Visits to the senior school organised in 2<sup>nd</sup> class:** As part of the transition programme, the 2<sup>nd</sup> class pupils have a series of planned visits to the senior school. They become familiar with the building, view the classrooms that they will be in and meet teachers and staff from the senior school.

**Nurture transition schedule:** The nurture teacher (Ms Delaney) in our school will work with the nurture teacher in the senior school to plan a transition schedule for the children attending the nurture room.

**Handover meetings between 2<sup>nd</sup> class teachers and 3<sup>rd</sup> class teachers:** Our 2<sup>nd</sup> class teachers meet with the 3<sup>rd</sup> class teachers from the senior school to pass on relevant information, that will help our children with transitioning. There is also a senior management meeting between the two schools to discuss pupils with additional/extra needs.

**Shared google drive between both schools:** Documents and important information on the children will be shared between the two schools on a shared google drive.

**Graduating ceremony for pupils at end of 2<sup>nd</sup> class:** Each June, a graduation ceremony takes place for our 2<sup>nd</sup> class pupils.

**Activities with senior school:** 2<sup>nd</sup> class pupils participate in shared reading and yard game activities with classes from the senior school.

**Transition target 3:** Continue to provide inclusion opportunities for pupils between Glaisin and their mainstream class

**Actions to address target 3**

**Continuous monitoring and discussion regarding inclusion:** The aim for every pupil attending our special classes is to include them into the mainstream activities as much as possible. Each pupil in the special classes is attached to a mainstream class. Monitoring and discussion will take place regularly throughout the school year to include the pupils successfully. This starts with reverse integration and the teachers in Glaisin work with the mainstream teachers to provide opportunities for inclusion.

**Opportunities for Glaisín teachers to meet with relevant mainstream teachers:** As part of our Croke Park hours, teachers in Glaisin will have an opportunity to meet with mainstream teachers to discuss the inclusion of pupils. There is also planning time on Friday afternoons where this will be discussed.

**Inclusion class-** 4<sup>th</sup> Glaisín class had been opened in our school. This is an inclusion class where pupils work between Glaisin and their mainstream class

**Transition target 4:** Support the transition of pupils enrolling in our school during the school year, from their previous school. Target for all pupils enrolling during the academic year to follow the planned schedule.

**Actions to address target 4:**

**Planned schedule for pupils enrolling from other schools:** Ms Park, Ms Delaney, Mr Roche and Mary Connolly (SNA) will prepare a schedule for pupils who enrol in our school during the academic year. This will be used to ensure the pupil settles into our school and develops friendships.

**All about me booklet for new pupils:** New pupils will complete an all about me booklet, so staff and peers will learn about their interests and hobbies.

**Meetings arranged for the parents of new pupils enrolling:** Mrs Nolan (principal) will meet with the parents of new children to assist with their transition to our school.

**Use of Google translate:** This is used to translate for EAL pupils There is also a basic information sheet for new pupils: what they will need when they are starting school.

**Monitoring:**

- Ongoing surveys and questionnaires to establish how parents and pupils feel about their transitions to and from our school.
- Continued discussions with pre-schools and the senior school on how best to support our pupils through transitions.
- Continued discussion in staff meetings on how best to support our pupils through transitions.
- Further develop links between Glaisín and our mainstream classes. Use of Croke Park hours to discuss the inclusion opportunities for pupils.
- Checklist completed for all incoming pupils enrolling through the academic year.

