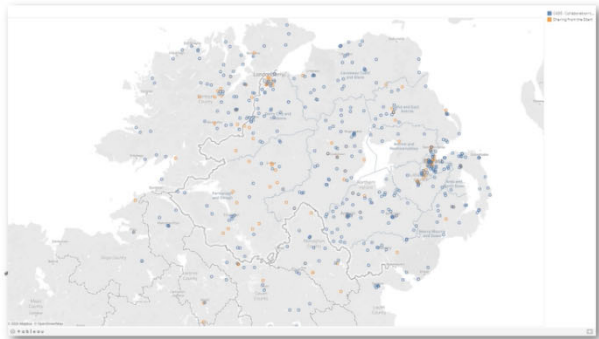


The €33.1m PEACE IV Shared Education projects, delivered across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland, have to date benefited

494 pre-schools/schools i.e. 106 pre-schools and 388 primary/and post-primary schools exceeding PEACE IV target (Target: 350 by 2023).

Over 2,000 practitioners/teachers have already completed training and now have the capacity to facilitate Shared Education (Target: 2,100 by 2023).

By its conclusion, Shared Education will have benefited 144,000 children.



LAUNCH OF THE
**SHARED EDUCATION (YEAR 5)
 IMPACT EVALUATION**
Key Findings

Societal Benefits

Educational Benefits

Economic Benefits



€4.2M
 SHARING FROM THE START (SFTS) INVOLVING EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

€28.9M
 COLLABORATION AND SHARING IN EDUCATION (CASE) INVOLVING PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS



Equipping education providers and children with the skills and attitudes needed to promote a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding, achieved through regular, sustained contact, and learning with those from different community backgrounds and between pre-schools/schools and the wider community.



Access to a wider education/ curriculum experience. Facilitating the sharing of ideas and good practice between education providers.



Making more effective and efficient use of limited equipment and resources.



Dealing with Differences

Children



"I found the entire experience extremely rewarding. Each year, the children were able to meet new children from partner settings and learn about different cultures and traditions, having first-hand experiences. The programme also allowed the children the opportunities to live out the values that we teach, encouraging our children to be confident, considerate and inclusive of others"



Those that 'Strongly Agreed' or 'Agreed' with statement



83%

Improved integration and engagement with peers from a different community background.



79%

Children feel comfortable and at ease when taking part in shared classes.



72%

Children can describe ways that they are similar and different to others in a shared classroom.



"The Shared Education journey has been such a rewarding experience for myself, my colleagues and the pupils within my school. Through our experiences we have come to respect, learn, and begin to understand how our similarities are much more prevalent than our differences"

Teachers

Those that 'Strongly Agreed' or 'Agreed' with statement



97%

Fostered cooperation between practitioners across the partnership.



88%

Improved cross-community understanding and relationships.

"The children developed and fostered a richer understanding of the world around them, the similarities and differences in the communities of each partnership school community which has resulted in more open, kind, caring and resilient individuals"

"Fundamentally it promotes acceptance, inclusion, understanding and co-operation among our nursery community. These are all values that permeate the pre-school curriculum as well as the ethos of our school"

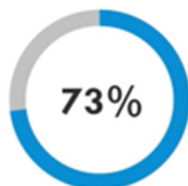
"The children in our school have greatly benefited from working with children from a special education background. It has afforded them the opportunity to see children not only from a different background but from a different ability level and has given them a greater understanding and empathy towards others"

Cross-Community Friendships



Face-to-face shared classes and connections outside of school were limited during the pandemic which impacted on the extent of friendships made when compared to pre-Covid-19 years – but once restrictions were lifted in Term 3 this led to increased contact and relationships being developed.

Strongly Agreed



Agreed



CASE/SFTS has led to **children making friends** in the shared classroom.

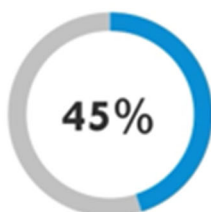
Team working tasks and informal interactions were regarded as the optimum approach for nurturing friendships.

“At every level across our schools, friendships and genuine partnership is happening. This project has brought significant benefits for all the schools and more importantly the children involved”

“Ultimately Shared Education has increased the opportunities for children participating to develop friendships, improve integration, extend social and communication skills but the quality of these is greater in a face-to-face capacity”

“I believe the lack of face-to-face lessons prevented true rapport and natural friendships to be developed as would have been the case in previous years”

Strongly Agreed



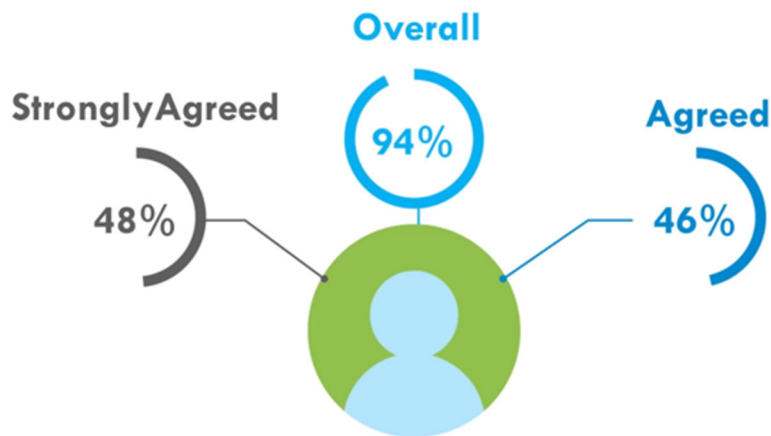
Agreed



That these friendships extended into home/community life.

Educational Benefits

Almost all (94%) agreed that CASE/SFTS has led to **improved educational outcomes** for participating children by providing access to **a wider education/ curriculum experience**.



Those that 'Strongly Agreed' or 'Agreed' with statement



Improved children's confidence.



Improved children's communication skills.



Improved children's social skills.



Some outcomes not as well developed this year when compared to pre-Covid-19 levels. Educational and reconciliation outcomes are better achieved through face-to-face contact.

"The benefits for the children have been immense. It provided them with so many opportunities that would have been impossible without the project. They have become confident, tolerant, and thoughtful learners"

"Activities where children are practically involved in problem solving and completing tasks collaboratively provide both educational depth and opportunities for relationship building"



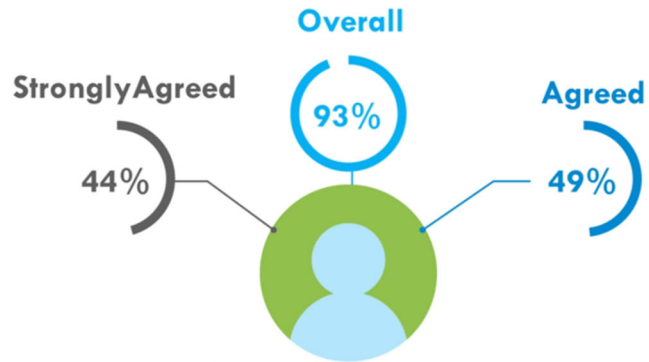
"Shared Education has become very much a part of our curriculum and more embedded in the vision and ethos in each school. It is no longer an add on activity"



Teachers

EARLY YEARS PRACTITIONERS & TEACHER TRAINING

93% agreed that involvement in CASE/SFTS has enhanced their ability and confidence to lead Shared Education initiatives.



Those that 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with statement



Enhanced teaching and learning in our school.



Fits with complements existing policy and day-to-day practice in education.



Improved professional practice across our partnership.



Increased access to curriculum resources and equipment.



Helped teachers gain new knowledge and skills.



Helped address priorities in school development plans.

"Staff have been given opportunities to enhance their professional development, pupils have had opportunities to be exposed to quality teaching and learning experiences. It has been a worthwhile journey and one I hope to continue on"

"We have thoroughly enjoyed our Shared Education experience and can see development in ourselves as staff members which has had, and will continue to have, a positive impact on the children in our care"



"For teachers, and school support staff, participation in the partnership has afforded the school endless opportunities for ongoing professional development, networking, enhanced and strengthened professional relationships"



Wider Community Impact



Children have a greater sense of the wider community for example, explore the wider community through shared learning, knowledge of different areas in the locality, travelling on a bus, customs, festivals, celebrations etc.

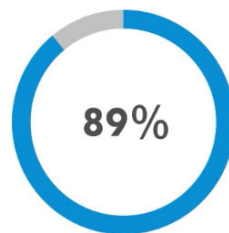
"The parents on both sides were so accepting of the programme and delighted to hear about their child's visit to the partner school. I feel in the current climate it had a real impact in promoting reconciliation and cross community friendships"

"The wider community enjoyed seeing the children work together and use local facilities"

Pre-school/School/Governors/Parents



Agreed that feedback from Parents was 'very positive' or 'positive'.

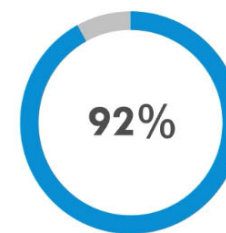


"Our school really enjoyed Shared Education. It was lovely to co-operate with teachers from across the border. It was nice to get to know them both professionally and personally. We collaborated to exchange different ideas and perspectives"

"The children enjoying and delighting in activities has motivated parents to embrace Shared Education further. Joint publications have heightened awareness of Shared Education and its benefits at all levels throughout the school community"



Agreed that feedback from Boards of Governors /Management Committees was 'very positive' or 'positive'.

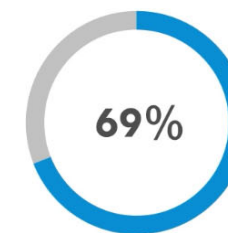


"The wider community is the hardest group to impact upon - this has been impossible due to Covid-19 in past 2 years"

"Governors are delighted with the opportunity available to children to meet and engage with local school. They are also delighted with the funding provided to assist with curriculum areas"



Agreed that feedback from Wider Community was 'very positive' or 'positive'. Covid-19 restrictions limited opportunities for engagement with the wider community.



Challenges

Top 3 challenges



Covid-19 restrictions
(97%)



Staff illness/shortages-
largely due to Covid-19
(48%)



Building relationship
with partner school
(35%)

Strong partnerships built through Shared Education have provided an added support network during Covid-19. Schools are now emerging from the pandemic and are benefitting from face-to-face contact.



Ongoing support and mentoring from SFTS Early Years Specialists and CASE Development Officers have also proved to be invaluable to partnerships.

"Our Early Years Advisor was always on hand to give guidance and support and we were delighted to share a few of our SFS experiences with her"

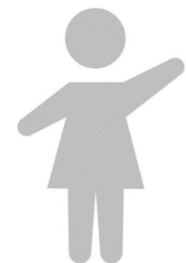
"We are very grateful for the support and guidance provided by the CASE development officers"

Good communication and partnership working have helped to overcome challenges.

"Staff were delighted to be reunited at planning, training and evaluation days. Having been through a period like Covid-19 made them appreciate the importance and need for Shared Education!"

"We are planning to move more towards more face-to-face opportunities as Covid-19 restrictions relax. We continue to be mindful of how we may have to adapt to the situation at the time so the skills we have learned this year will be invaluable should they be required in the new academic year"

"Due to lack of face-to-face time the children's relationships were hampered although when they did get to meet their relationships began to flourish"



Final Reflections



“Shared Education has been invaluable to fostering relationships between our schools. It has engendered trust within a community with different cultural perspectives, by allowing pupils to share and learn together, in a non-threatening and very enjoyable environment. The commitment of staff has enabled Shared Education to be integrated into our school curriculum. It has forged lasting links between our pupils that will allow them to have a broader understanding of their community as adults - all of these are excellent achievements”

“It is an extremely valuable programme that offers opportunities for communities to come together in positive way. A shared focus on providing the best start in life for our young children has enabled both staff and parents to work together, sharing ideas and good practice and celebrating achievements throughout this year”

“Shared Education adds to the educational experiences that schools offer and I wholeheartedly have never experienced such a rewarding, valuable and beneficial project like PEACE IV. Shared Education is the way forward, the way to promote good practice and to celebrate all that is good”



*Thank you to all the pre-schools
and schools for leading the way
in Shared Education.*

