ANN SWIFT
C O N S U L T I N G

REPORT

Evaluation of the Nurture Schools Project

Submitted to: Educate Together
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1. Introduction

The Educate Together Nurture Schools project was initiated in late 2020. The project is informed by the Nurture approach, a methodology which focuses on "relating to and coaching children and young people to help them form positive relationships, build resilience and improve their social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing. When used in school, nurture improves attendance, behaviour and attainment, and ensures every child is able to learn" (Nurture UK, n.d.). The approach was first established in the UK in the early 1970's (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). In the UK, at least 2,200 schools were participating in the National Nurturing Schools Programme in the academic year 2020-2021 (Nurture UK, 2021). In Ireland, Educate Together's Nurture Schools project is the first of its kind to adopt this approach in a structured way across a network of schools.

The Educate Together project arose at the request of a group of Principals within the Educate Together network, who were inspired by the positive experience of Ennis Educate Together National School (ETNS) with the Nurture approach, and who were looking for the opportunity to implement something similar within their own schools. With funding secured from a commercial sponsor (Salesforce), and an Advisory Group and additional project partners put in place to assist with implementation[1], Educate Together was in a position to recruit a target of 25 schools into a programme that would respond to this request. School recruitment commenced in late 2020, in line with criteria agreed by the Advisory Group, and a total of 29 schools were recruited (of whom 27 ultimately followed through with the programme after the initial stage. Staff changes in these two schools resulted in the schools rethinking their involvement with the project). Staff training and preparation at the individual school level commenced in January 2021, with the first students participating in Nurture groups at the start of the 2021-2022 academic year. The programme has continued to be rolled out in subsequent years, but it is on the experience of this initial cohort of schools, teachers and students, in this initial stage of the project, that this evaluation focuses.

A key challenge with the roll out of the Nurture programme was the unanticipated re-closure of the schools in January 2021 due to Covid. This meant that teachers were embarking on a new course just as they were also being asked to pivot their teaching practice back to online. It also meant that they were participating in significant online training, shortly after ending a full day of teaching online themselves. The closure of schools also meant that other school preparations were disrupted. Nevertheless, Nurture groups were up and running as planned from September 2021. While Covid posed operational difficulties for the programme, Nurture's roll out was timely in the sense that it provided an opportunity to provide additional support to disadvantaged students whose education had been particularly affected by school closure during the pandemic.

In November 2022, Educate Together issued an invitation to tender for the evaluation of the first phase of the Nurture Schools project. According to the tender documentation, the purpose of the evaluation would be to 'focus on the goals and objectives of the project, which were to:

1.   Improve social and emotional skills development, attendance and confidence in learning ability of students in Educate Together schools through participation in the Nurture Schools project
2.   Increase the knowledge, confidence and skills of educators in teaching students who are experiencing or at risk of educational disadvantage
3.   Enhance educational practitioners' knowledge, skills, and students' capacity to engage in online and blended learning'.

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[1] Additional project partners were: Quality Matters, Nurturing Schools Ireland and Camara Education (now known as Kinia).

According to the tender documentation, the evaluation was to place a particular emphasis on analysing the existing data to assess the impact of the project against these goals. Educate Together notes that the programme was exploratory and that, while clear project goals and a process for collecting data were established from the outset, the focus was on delivery in the challenging circumstances of Covid rather than on research design for evaluation or assessment. Consequently, while there is a considerable amount of secondary data available for the current evaluation, it is somewhat fragmented and not always ideal for evaluative use. Some of the key issues relating to data quality are considered in Section 3.1.3. Of particular note is the large volume of missing data, and the uncertainty regarding the stage of the programme – whether before or after participation - at which student feedback was gathered

However, Educate Together feels that it is important to review the project at this stage, and therefore this evaluation has sought to make the best use of the data that is available.

Educate Together has requested that the current evaluation focus on impact rather than implementation. Consequently, aside from participant feedback on aspects of training *delivery* which is considered briefly at Educate Together's specific request, this report seeks to assess the success of the Nurture programme only in terms of the outcomes sought for teachers and students. The evaluation is guided by four research questions which are outlined in Section 4.

2. Evaluation summary

The impacts which the Nurture programme was designed to bring about were initially agreed between Educate Together and the project's partners in 2020 and formalised as part of the programme's Strategic Plan of June 2022. For the purpose of this evaluation, they have been further refined and distilled into four research questions which the assessment has sought to answer through the available evidence. The following is a summary of the findings under each of these questions.

1. ***Has the socio-emotional development, and behaviour, of students who have participated in the Nurture programme improved over the course of their participation?***

   Boxall Profile data forms the key component of the data collected as part of the Nurture programme. The Boxall Profile is a psychometric assessment tool to understand an individual student's developmental needs and functioning. This data is available for a subset of students participating in Nurture (n=47), and the analysis of this data shows that Developmental scores changed in a positive direction for approximately three quarters of the sample, and Diagnostic scores for approximately two thirds of the group of students. Average scores for each school all progressed positively over the course of the Nurture programme. This is clear evidence, albeit for a small group of students, that the Nurture programme has achieved its objectives around socio-emotional development and improved behaviour.

   The quantitative feedback from teachers and staff shows their strong view that students are better at self-regulating their behaviour, and are better behaved, as a result of Nurture. Students are less sure about the positive impact of the programme on their behaviour, although on balance just over half think it has been beneficial. Anecdotally, both teachers and students point to areas where Nurture has improved student behaviour, for example enabling them to be "calmer", "more settled", or to deal better with their anger. Teachers and students also feel that Nurture has helped to reduce student anxiety, although again teachers and staff are considerably more positive on this point than students.

2. *Do students who participate in the Nurture programme have a greater sense of belonging in school, and does this sense of belonging lead to greater engagement with school?*

In the qualitative feedback, it is in the area of school engagement that both teachers / staff and students feel that the Nurture programme has brought about the most notable benefits. In particular, almost all students are extremely positive about how much they enjoy Nurture. For most students, this is a goal in itself and they are generally not focused, at least in their spontaneous responses to general and open-ended questions, on the other types of impact that the Nurture programme is seeking. Teachers and staff, on the other hand, make the link between student enjoyment of school, relationships with peers, and additional educational benefits. They often point out that a happy child is better able to learn, and credit Nurture for having made a significant difference in this area in their schools. Quantitatively, 67% of students agreed to a greater or lesser extent with the statement that "I enjoy coming to school more because I attend Nurture", and 69% agree that "attending Nurture helps me to get on better with my classmates". A very considerable 94% of teachers agree to some extent that "The children attending Nurture are enjoying school more now". Reports by teachers on individual students also show that teacher-reported confidence levels for students increased over the course of Nurture for all those whose baseline confidence was either at or below the teacher's expectations.

Finally, to the extent that attendance data can be seen as indicative of school engagement - particularly challenging in the context of Covid guidelines which obliged students to remain at home under certain circumstances - Nurture can also be deemed a success. Average attendance for the group of Nurture participants for whom such data is available (n=73) rose from 78% to 84% over the course of the programme. Notably, for those with the lowest attendance levels before participation in Nurture (n=17), attendance increased from an average of 52% to 70% during their time in the programme.

3. **Does any improved socio-emotional development, behaviour, sense of belonging, or greater engagement lead ultimately to other improved educational outcomes, such as literacy and numeracy?**

The assessment under this research question relies solely on teacher-reports of literacy and numeracy for individual students, based on a five point scale of whether teachers feel that an individual student's performance is at, below or above expectations over the course of Nurture participation. According to teachers across the seven Cohort One schools for which there is data on this measure, the literacy and numeracy of all but the highest performing students at baseline increased over the first two or three terms of their involvement in Nurture. This represents the majority of students for whom data is available. Qualitatively, students did not tend to spontaneously focus on this element of the potential benefits of Nurture, preferring to focus on the food, the fun they have, and the opportunity to mix with other students.

4. **To what extent has the capacity (in relation to knowledge, confidence and skills) of teachers and other school staff to support students with socio-emotional or behavioural difficulties, or who are at risk of educational disadvantage, been increased as a result of the Nurture Programme?**

Both the quantitative and qualitative responses from teachers and staff show that they believe that the programme increased their capacity, across all three named dimensions, to support students with socio-emotional or behavioural difficulties, although it is in relation to 'knowledge' that they experienced the most improvement. Across the seven selected indicators of teacher capacity that were measured at baseline and follow-up, the average score (out of 10) increased by one full point from an average of 7.45 to an average of 8.37 after participation in the programme. Across the seven indicators, teacher and staff

confidence in their skills to support students was the lowest at baseline and increased least over the course of Nurture, although it did increase by 0.7 points. Both the quantitative and qualitative responses highlight how it was in the understanding of the concepts associated with the Nurture approach that teachers and staff felt that their training and participation had led to the greatest change.

In summary, the analysis of secondary data which has formed the basis for this evaluation suggests that, based on findings relating to the students for whom data is available, the Nurture programme has been successful in the four areas of impact which were sought.

3. Methodology

3.1.1 Data sources

As stipulated by Educate Together in their RFT (Educate Together, 2022) this evaluation has been developed largely through secondary analysis of existing data. Multiple sources of data for the programme have been interrogated, as outlined in Table 1. They include largely quantitative data, although the data arising from online surveys contains responses to both closed and open-ended questions. Data was collected at various time points, across the three key stakeholder groups, using a variety of modes, mainly self-response online survey. These 14 sources were pulled together into three consolidated datasets to aid analysis, representing data for participating schools, teachers and students. The three datasets were analysed together where appropriate[2].

A particular feature of the Nurture approach is the use of the Boxall Profile to identify children who may benefit from the programme, and in some cases (as here), to assess student progress throughout the programme. The Boxall Profile is a psychometric assessment tool to understand an individual student's developmental needs and functioning. The Profile is divided into two sections: the Diagnostic Profile (34 items, scored out of 136), which describes 'behaviours that inhibit or interfere with the child's satisfactory involvement in schools' (Bennathan & Boxall, 2013), and the Developmental Strands (34 items, also scored out of 136) which describes 'different aspects of the developmental process of the earliest years' (Bennathan & Boxall, 2013). The data for individual students from a convenience sample of three of the Cohort One schools was available for this evaluation. For the purposes of this evaluation, only the total Diagnostic and Developmental scores have been analysed.

Educate Together also provided the evaluator with some contextual administrative data in relation to the programme, including minutes of the meetings of the Advisory Group, reports from project partners and presentations from individual participant schools. These have been briefly reviewed as important context for the sources listed below, but the scope of the current evaluation has not allowed for a full analysis of these additional, contextual materials.

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[2] Analyses were performed using SPSS 25.0 for Windows and visualisations were compiled using Tableau Desktop 2022.4.0.

Table 1: Data interrogated as part of the evaluation of the analysis of the Nurture programme

Stakeholder group	Data source	Method of collection[3]
Participating schools	Individual school-by-school spreadsheets for all 27 participating schools (n=27)	Initial expressions of interest & subsequent requests for data from Educate Together to individual schools, compiled into a single spreadsheet for each school
Teachers & other educators	Theory & Practice training baseline (n=51)	Online survey
	Theory & Practice training evaluation (n=18)	Online survey (collected by Nurturing Schools Ireland)
	Theory & Practice training follow-on (n=16)	Online survey
	Wholeschool Nurture training baseline (n=71)	Online survey
	Wholeschool Nurture training follow-on (n=15)	Online survey
	Full-sample follow-on (Dec 2022) (n=56)	Online survey
	Trauma-informed practice training evaluation baseline (n=82)	Online survey
	Trauma-informed practice training evaluation follow up (n=12)	
Students	Self-response surveys baseline (n=248)	Online survey (fully anonymous)
	Self-response surveys, follow-on (n=116)	Online survey (fully anonymous)
	Anonymised Boxall data for 47 students from 3 individual schools (matched to teacher-reports where possible)	Teacher-collected data on a validated scale (inputted by teachers into an online tool)
	Teacher-reports on students	School administrative data, provided in anonymised form to Educate Together
	Attendance data (anonymised)	School administrative data, provided by schools to Educate Together

3.1.2 Respondent profiles

Schools: all 27 participating schools provided some data to Educate Together, although only 12 schools provided complete data. There were six post-primary schools amongst the participants, and the remainder were primary schools. All but one of the post-primary schools participating in the programme (n=5) provided full data to Educate Together, and the remaining seven for whom full data is available are primary schools. (Full data for all 27 schools was available for the evaluation in terms of both size and location. Section 5.1.1 provides further detail on the profile of participating schools, based on the data that the schools themselves provided).

Teachers and other educators: teachers were asked to give their feedback on three different sets of training which took place as part of the Nurture programme: Theory and Practice training (T&P), Trauma Informed Practice training (TIP) and Wholeschool Nurture training. TIP training took place as part of the Nurture project but was seen as complementary rather than fundamental to the project's objectives. Consequently this training was evaluated only in terms of teachers' views specifically on the quality of the training delivery rather than impact, and this data is included in Appendix Two. Likewise, some teacher feedback in relation to the T&P training related specifically to delivery, and an analysis of this is included in Appendix One. The profile of teacher respondents in the following section relates, instead, to their feedback and experiences with regard to the relationship between the training and its impact on the broader objectives of

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[3] All survey tools were developed by Educate Together. All tools were administered by Educate Together unless otherwise stated.

the programme, which were probed in separate surveys distributed to teachers. In total, there were 135 individual teachers who responded to these surveys at any stage.

A total of 51 of the 53 participants in the T&P training for Cohort One schools completed a baseline survey. This is an excellent response rate. Of these 51 teachers, 14 responded to the later follow-up survey (a 26% response rate), while a further two respondents at this second time point had not completed the initial survey.

For the Wholeschool Nurture training, 68 of the 129 participants responded to the baseline survey, representing 53% of participants. Of these, 12 responded to the follow-up survey (a 9% response rate), while a further three who had not responded at baseline submitted a response at this time point.

Finally, in December 2022 Educate Together circulated a general survey to all T&P or Wholeschool Nurture training participants. This survey asked similar questions to those in the T&P or Wholeschool Nurture follow-up surveys, but captured follow-up responses from an additional handful of participants, who had not responded in the initial follow-up. Given the rather low response rates to the initial follow-up surveys, responses to this later 'catch-all' survey circulation have been merged with the earlier responses for the later analyses. While this means that responses at different time periods are combined, it is a better approach than assuming a small number of surveys to be representative of the wider picture. Given that, in most cases, teacher participants consented to their names being collected alongside their feedback, it has been largely possible to ensure that each individual respondent is only represented once in this combined data.

Figure 1: Gender of teachers responding to Theory & Practice / Wholeschool Nurture surveys (n=114)[4]

Theory & Practice (teacher n=51, school n=25))   Wholeschool (teacher n=72, school n=25)
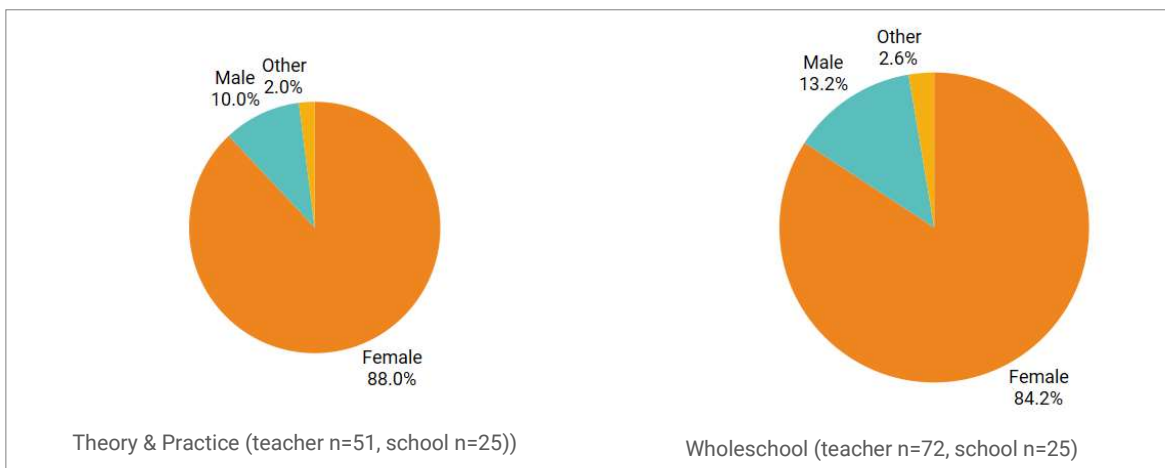
A very large proportion of teachers and educators responding to either the T&P or Wholeschool Nurture training surveys were female. This is likely to reflect the gender imbalance in teaching in Ireland, rather than an issue with training participation or in survey response. Respondents were most likely to be class or subject teachers, making up around one third of respondents. Additional Needs Assistants (ANAs) and staff in senior school roles (i.e. Principal and Deputy Principal) were more strongly represented in the Wholeschool survey responses than in the T&P data. This is likely to reflect the greater participation of these personnel in the Wholeschool training.

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[4] Data does not include responses to the final, follow-up survey in December 2022

Figure 2: School role of teacher and educator respondents (n=114)

Theory & Practice (teacher n=51, school n=25)   Wholeschool (teacher n=72, school n=25)
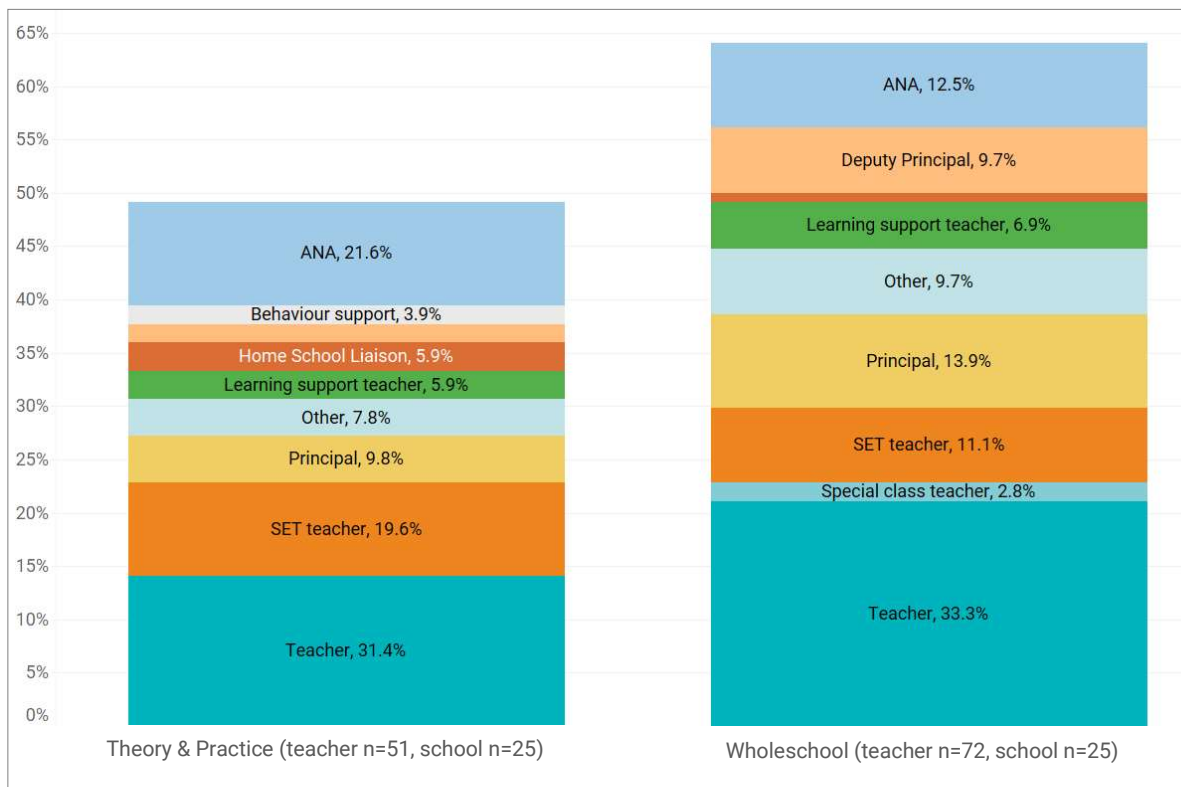
Students: student feedback was gathered anonymously via online survey. Schools compiled the Boxall profiles on children, and this data was pseudonymised before being passed to Educate Together for analysis. Teacher reports on individual children were also passed to Educate Together pseudonymously, using only the school's internal unique child code as a reference. Parental consent for participation in the research was sought alongside consent for participation in the Nurture programme on an opt out basis. The consent process was administered by the participating schools.

The profile of students responding to the online self-response survey is considered below. There were a total of 364 student responses to the baseline and follow-up online surveys, 260 at baseline and 104 at follow up, representing a 40% response rate to the second survey, in comparison with response to the baseline. Since the surveys were anonymous, it is not possible to state the number of individual students for whom data has been collected at both time points. However, the data does show that 16 of the 27 participating schools were represented in the survey data at baseline (59%), and that eight of these schools were represented again in the follow-up survey responses. There were further follow-up responses from students at two schools who had not been represented in the baseline data (10 of 27 schools is a 37% response rate at school level for the second survey). Only three of the six participating post-primary schools were represented in either the baseline or follow-up data.

Note also that schools were responsible for allocating children to the Nurture groups, and the number or profile of children involved in the scheme at school level has not been collected to date by Educate Together. Consequently it is not possible to say the proportion of participating students who are represented in the 248 baseline responses, nor therefore the extent to which the profile of survey respondents outlined below reflects the profile of all students who participated in Nurture.

Figure 3: Age profile of students responding to the request for feedback at either baseline or follow-up (n=364)

Baseline (student n=248, school n=16)

Follow-up (student n=116, school n=10)
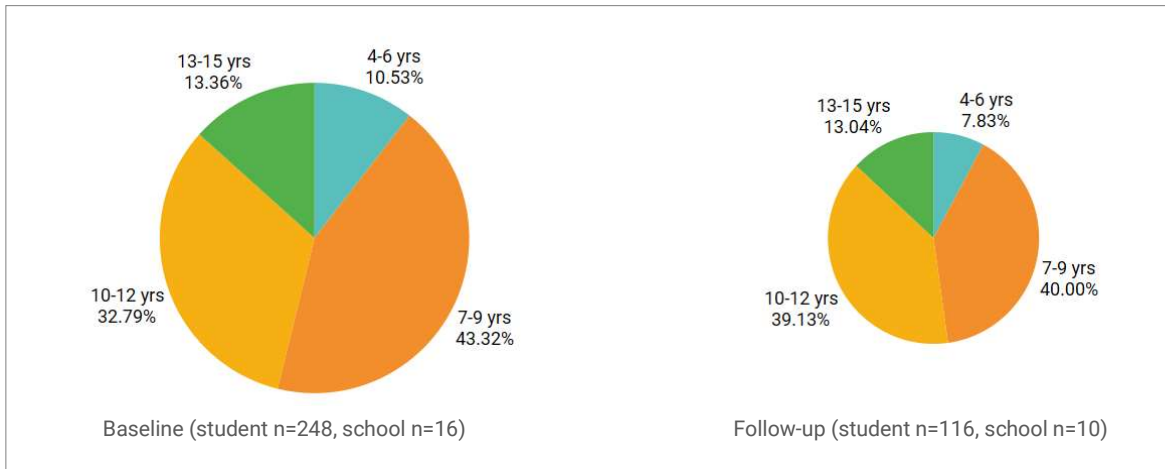
In terms of age, approximately three quarters of respondents at either time point were aged between seven and twelve years old. At baseline, older (13-15 years) and younger (4-6 years) children made up approximately similar proportions of respondents, but at follow-up it was children in the older age group who were most likely to be amongst the respondents. Student respondents were approximately twice as likely to be male as female.

Figure 4: Gender of students responding to the request for feedback at either baseline or follow-up (n=364)

Baseline (student n=248, school n=16)

Follow-up (student n=116, school n=10)
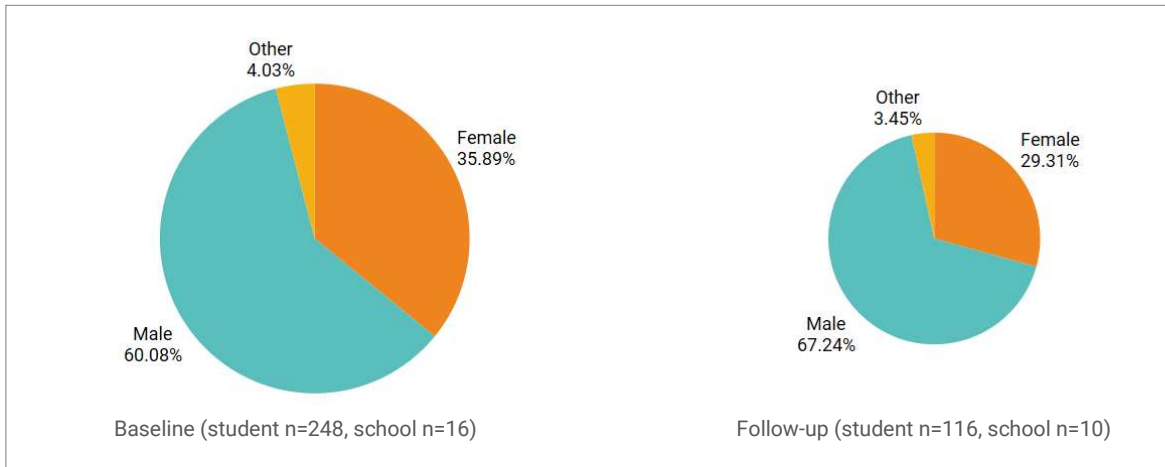
3.1.3 Data quality

This evaluation has drawn on 14 data sources consisting largely of quantitative data. Since the framework for the collection of this data was informed by operational rather than research priorities, there are a number of issues with data quality for the present evaluation which should be born in mind when considering its findings.

The first issue relates to the volume of missing data. For example, while the response from teachers and staff to the baseline T&P and Wholeschool Nurture surveys was 96% and 53% respectively, the response rates to the follow-up surveys were much lower at between approximately 10% and 20%. Educate Together's decision to circulate a 'catch-all' survey in December 2022 to try and increase this number was somewhat successful. Consequently these additional responses have been rolled in with the earlier follow-up responses to generate a larger sample. However, this means that these groups contain a mix of responses from staff at rather different stages of the Nurture project.

The second key issue relates to the data from the Boxall tests. Schools were initially asked to provide this data by Nurture group rather than for individual students, but the resulting data was very incomplete and also its meaning as evidence hard to discern. As part of the present evaluation, five schools whose data had seemed relatively complete were therefore asked to provide the data once again, but this time for individual students (anonymised). Three of these five schools were in a position to do so and it is on this basis that Boxall evidence has been analysed. However, it is important to note that the information only relates to a convenience sample of three of the 27 participating schools, thereby accounting for just 47 student participants.

Two further issues relate to the student data. Firstly, since the schools were responsible for identifying the students to participate in Nurture and were not required to pass this information on to Educate Together, the total number of students who participated in the programme across the 27 schools is not known. This has implications for the accuracy with which missing data can be identified, and the extent to which the student feedback surveys are a fair representation of the children and young people who participated in the programme is not known. There was also an administrative challenge with the distribution of the baseline and follow-up surveys to students, which has led to confusion over the allocation of responses to these two categories. The comparison of the baseline and follow-up position for students is therefore likely to be inaccurate, which in turn has likely led to the apparent contradiction between the qualitative findings from students – which are extremely positive – and the quantitative, which indicate instead that there has been little change, or even a decrease, on key indicators.

4. Research questions

Four priority research questions to guide the evaluation were agreed with Educate Together as part of this assessment process. The most appropriate evidence to inform the assessment of impact in line with these questions was also identified. While the questions were devised as the project roll-out continued, rather than from project inception, they echo the objectives for the Nurture project which had been agreed by Educate Together with project partners at the outset, and which were later formalised in the project's strategic plan of June 2022.

The agreed research questions are as follows:

1. Has the socio-emotional development, and behaviour, of students who have participated in the Nurture programme improved over the course of their participation?

2. Do students who participate in the Nurture programme have a greater sense of belonging in school, and does this sense of belonging lead to greater engagement with school?

3. Does any improved socio-emotional development, behaviour, sense of belonging, or greater engagement lead ultimately to other improved educational outcomes, such as literacy and numeracy?

4. To what extent has the capacity (in relation to knowledge, confidence and skills) of teachers and other school staff to support students with socio-emotional or behavioural difficulties, or who are at risk of educational disadvantage, been increased as a result of the Nurture Programme?

5. Full assessment

5.1   Implementation

5.1.1 Profile of participating schools

A considerable amount of thought went into the process by which the target of 25 schools would be recruited to the Nurture programme, particularly at Advisory Group level. Schools were to be selected on the basis of need, which was to be established in line with key indices determined by Educate Together. The indices selected – some appropriate for primary and others for post-primary schools - were the proportion of students: with a medical card; on the free book scheme; from a Traveller or Roma background; who require support for English as an Additional Language (EAL); who are homeless, who are in direct provision; or who are in care. Initially, schools were circulated with an information sheet and asked to express an interest in the programme. Ultimately, Educate Together was able to accommodate all 29 applicants to the first phase of the programme, and the eligibility criteria were not applied.

The scatterplot in Figure 5 shows how the group of participating schools represented a diverse cross section of schools across the Educate Together network, in terms of size. The ratio of primary to post-primary schools is approximately equivalent to that of the wider Educate Together network. Seven of the participating schools were DEIS schools, representing 26% of all Cohort One schools, which is larger than the representation (14.5%) of DEIS schools across the Educate Together network. Only one of the schools was deemed to be a 'rural' school, and 63% (n=17) were in Dublin. (A map of the participating schools is included in the Appendix).

Figure 5: Scatterplot showing participating schools by size (students / teachers) (n=27)
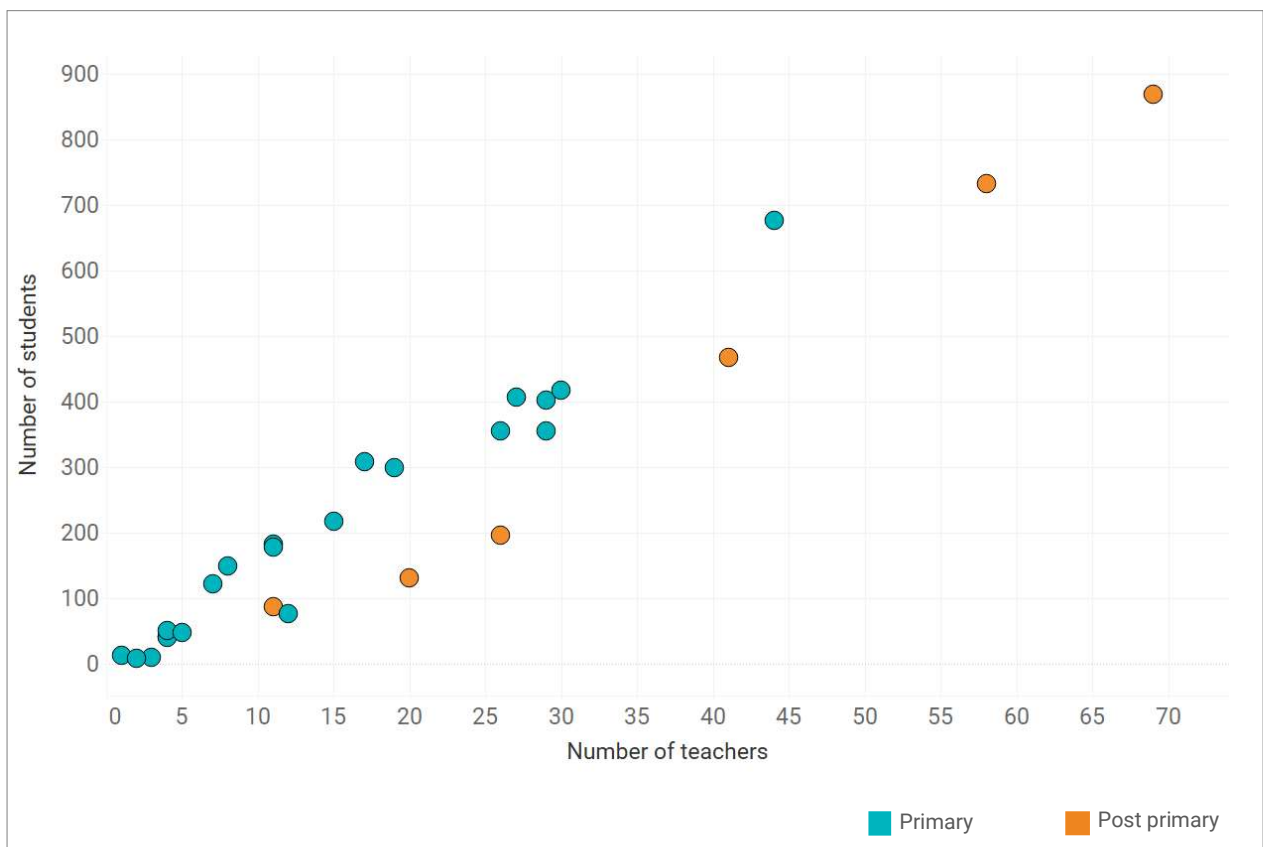
A total of nine of the participating schools scored in the top quartile of the full sample on three or more of the selected indicators, and of these, three schools scored in the top quartile on four or five, suggesting that they are particularly disadvantaged. These schools were: Clogher Road

Community College; Tuam Educate Together National School and Thornleigh Educate Together National School.

In summary, the sample of participating schools reflects the wider Educate Together network in terms of level (primary / post-primary), while DEIS schools are more heavily represented in the Nurture programme. Given that schools were to be selected on the basis of need, then this is as expected. The level to which the profile of participating schools reflects that of the wider Educate Together network in terms of size, location, or the seven key indices selected by Educate Together, and therefore the extent to which the resulting sample met the goals of the programme, is not known from the data available to the evaluator and therefore cannot be assessed.

5.1.2   Training feedback

Educate Together requested that participant feedback from two training modules funded as part of the Nurture project should be analysed as part of the Nurture project evaluation. These modules were related to the concept of educational disadvantage and how the Nurture approach is designed to help ('Theory and Practice') and also to trauma informed practice (TIP) in schools. While ultimately these modules were clearly aimed at developing teacher capacity, this specific feedback relates primarily to the quality of content and delivery of the training modules, rather than the ultimate impact of this training, and consequently it is considered under 'Implementation'.

A question-by-question analysis of this feedback, and a summary assessment of the key findings for each module, is provided in the Appendix. Overall, however, the feedback was positive. In general, participants appeared to have an improved understanding of the relevant concepts following the training, and to be more confident bringing this theoretical understanding to bear on their practice as educators.

5.2   Impact

5.2.1   Student behaviour

The first research question for the evaluation asks: has the socio-emotional development, and behaviour, of students who have participated in the Nurture programme improved over the course of their participation?

In terms of behaviour, educators / staff were asked to rate the 'relevance to you' of a number of statements, including whether 'the children attending Nurture are better behaved in class as a result' and whether 'Nurture has helped some students to be better at self regulating their behaviour and emotions'. Students were asked to rate the level to which a number of statements were 'true for them', including the statement 'I behave better in class since going to Nurture'. Almost 85% of staff felt that the students were better at self-regulating their behaviour, and 78% that they were 'better' behaved as a result of Nurture. A lower 51% of students felt that they are able to behave better in class since attending Nurture. Of the eight follow-up indicators for staff, and the nine follow-up indicators for students, improved behaviour was not reported as one of the areas in which Nurture had brought the *most* benefit (teachers rated the students' enjoyment of school since Nurture participation as the area of most impact, and students also rated their greater enjoyment of school as the most positive outcome). However, in general, staff in particular felt that there had been a considerable improvement in the area of behaviour as a result of the programme.

Figure 6: Teacher/staff feedback on student behaviour following participation in Nurture (n=67)
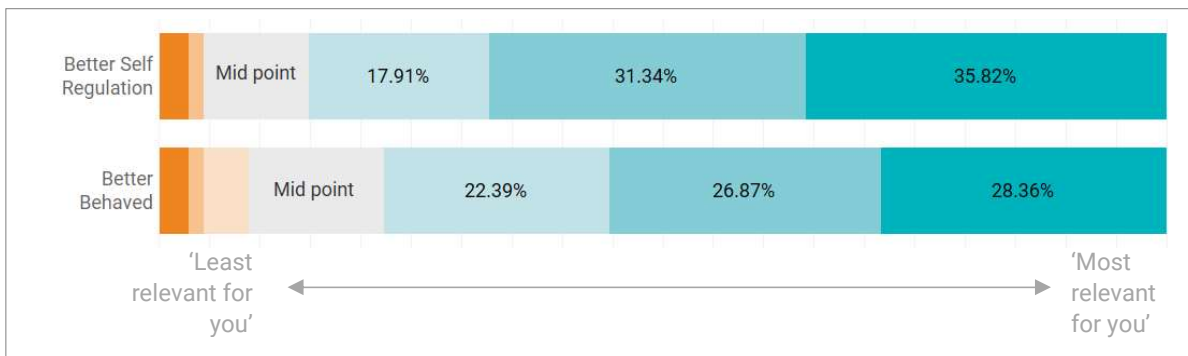
Figure 7: Student feedback on their own behaviour following participation in Nurture (n=76[5])
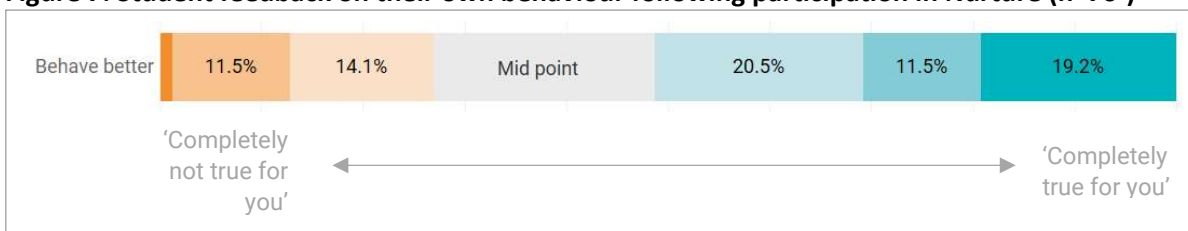
Students were given the opportunity to make an open response to two questions in the feedback survey: they were asked specifically if there was anything that they didn't enjoy about Nurture; and they were also asked if they had any further comments. The students focus on their level of enjoyment of Nurture in these comments, and the feedback is overwhelmingly positive. This qualitative data provides a very rich picture of what the children and young people particularly like about Nurture. In particular, they enjoy the food and drink that is provided, the opportunity to mix with friends, and the games and fun that they have. There was very little that children and young people disliked about Nurture, but the most common complaint was that they didn't like to miss class or missing lunch.

A handful of students commented on the impact that being part of Nurture had had on their behaviour, and all felt that it had been beneficial. As one student put it, *" I love it and I get to sit and talk with Firends and teacher and I used to get into fights quit a bit and this has seamed to keep me out of trouble".* Another commented, *"Nurture helps me with my angriness. Nurture makes it easier to be with my friends"[6].*

5.2.2 Student socio-emotional development

The socio-emotional development of the young people and children participating in Nurture was principally measured using data from Boxall Profiles. There was Boxall data at more than one time point for 47 children in three of the 27 Nurture schools. All three of these were primary schools. Figures 8 and 9 show how the Developmental and Diagnostic scores for the 47 children changed over the course of Nurture. Average Developmental and Diagnostic scores have changed in a positive direction for all three schools. The scale of the change seems to have been slightly more for Diagnostic, than for Developmental scores.

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[5] Due to an administrative error, not all children who were surveyed at follow up were asked this question.
[6] Qualitative feedback from students has not been edited.

Figure 8: Change in student Developmental Boxall scores from baseline to recent (n=47)
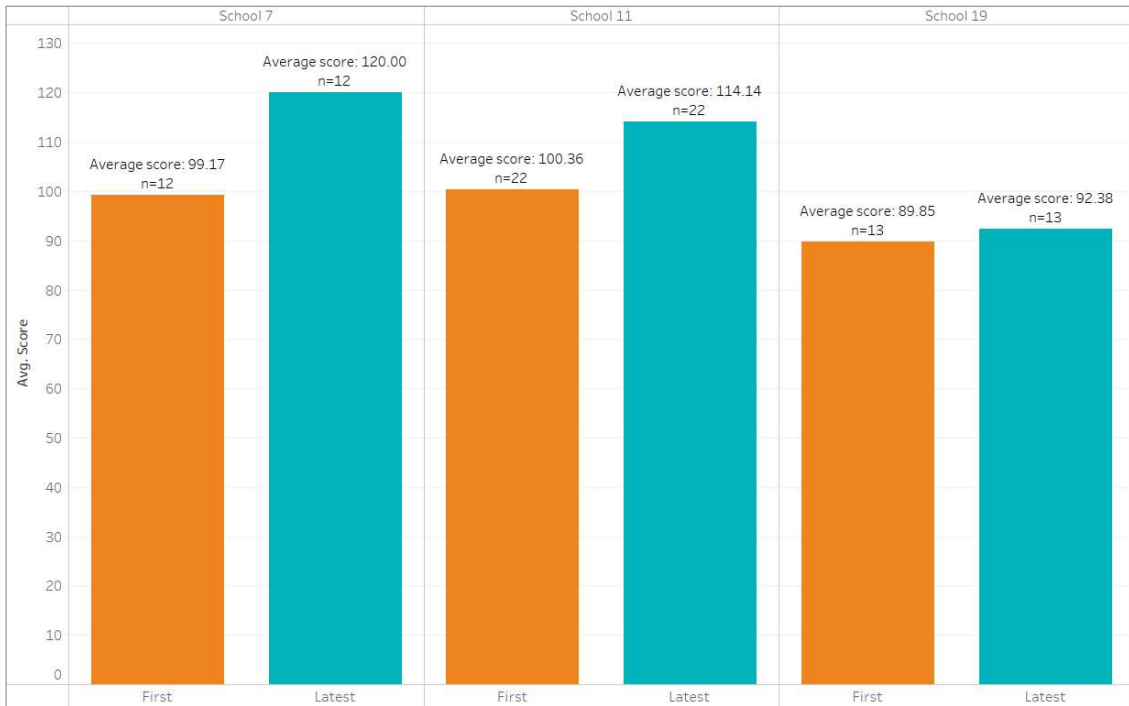
Figure 9: Change in student Diagnostic Boxall scores from baseline to recent (n=47)

Progress over time for the students whose Developmental and Diagnostic scores were in the lowest quartile at baseline are shown individually in Figures 10 and 11. All students with these low scores at the outset improved these outcomes over the course of Nurture. This constitutes strong evidence for the success of Nurture in the area of improved socio-emotional development amongst students.

Figure 10: Developmental scores, over time, of individual students with the lowest baseline scores (n=12)
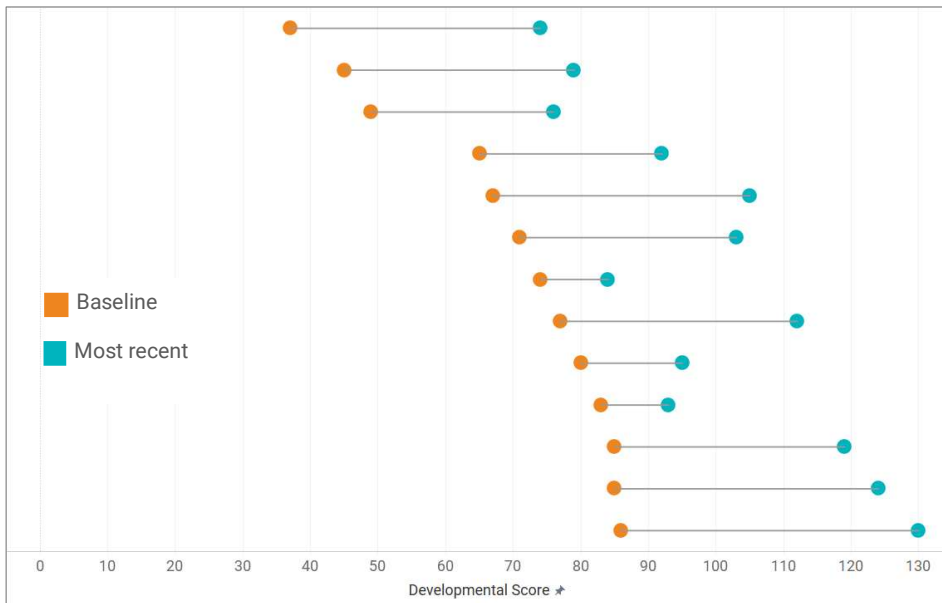
Figure 11: Diagnostic scores, over time, of individual students with the lowest baseline scores (n=12)
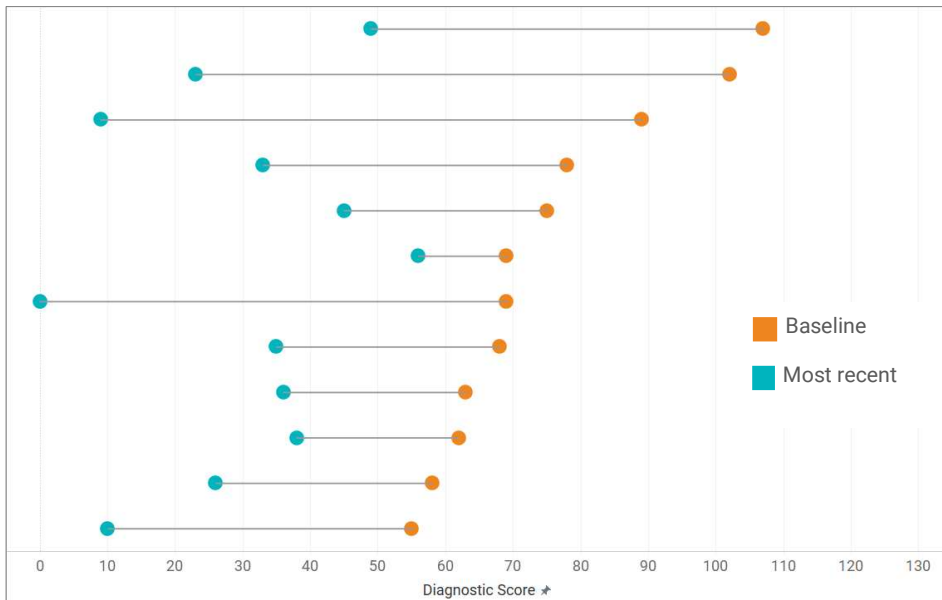
Student and teacher feedback was also analysed as evidence for the level of impact of Nurture on student socio-emotional development. Both students and teachers felt that, on balance, student anxiety had reduced over the course of Nurture, although, once again, teachers were more likely to be positive about the impact of Nurture than were students. As with behaviour, the question of improved socio-emotional development after Nurture was not the focus of students responding to the general, open questions about the programme, but two students did comment

that *"i love going to the nurture room cause it helps me calm down sometimes"* and that *"it calms me down when im stressed or angrey"*.

Figure 12: Teacher/staff feedback on reduced anxiety following participation in Nurture (n=67)
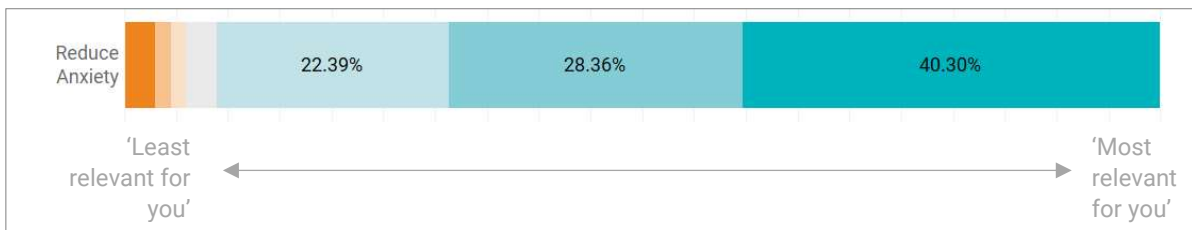
Figure 13: Student feedback on their anxiety levels after Nurture (n=76[7])
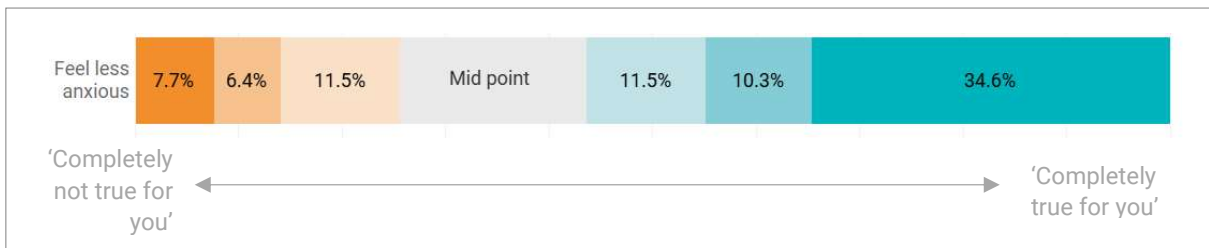
Most open-ended questions posed to teachers through the surveys focused on the benefits they themselves had experienced through participation in Nurture. However, the benefits to students that teachers had observed arose spontaneously across their responses. Overwhelmingly, teachers are extremely positive about how Nurture has benefited students. They particularly highlight the benefits in the area of school engagement and the students' relationships with teachers and peers, which are considered in the next section. However, a handful of teachers also commented specifically on the benefits of Nurture to student behaviour. Students are reported to be more 'settled' in class, *"calmer and more content"*, and "*better able to respond to stressful situations"*. One teacher reported that *"students who were violent have made good attachments with the staff involved and the violence has reduced greatly"*. A number of teachers pointed out that children and young people involved in Nurture behaved better, not only within the confines of the Nurture group, but also in mainstream class, and that their class teachers had commented on the change. One or two teachers also commented that parents had noted improved behaviour at home. Teachers ascribe much of this change to the children and young people's improved communication skills, which they had learned as part of Nurture.

5.2.3   *Student sense of belonging, and engagement in school*

There were 21 quantitative indicators for the success of the Nurture programme selected by Educate Together to be asked of students both at baseline and follow-up. Of these, 14 relate to the child or young person's sense of belonging and engagement in school. Note that due to some administrative confusion, the allocation of student responses to the baseline or follow up groups was not always clear for all surveys. This is important context for the finding that students' average scores on the 14 selected indicators remained largely unchanged or even fell between baseline and follow-up surveys. At both time points, students were most likely to be positive about learning to get along, and feeling respected. They were least likely to agree that they felt unhappy or didn't want to go to school.

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[7] Due to an administrative error, not all children who were surveyed at follow up were asked some of these questions.

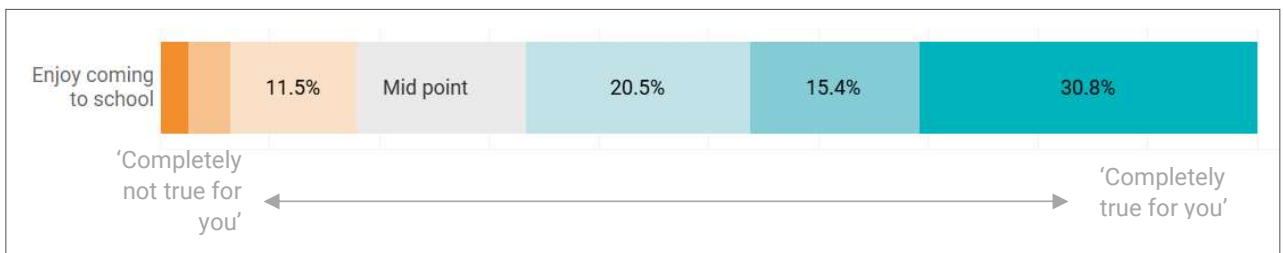**Figure 14: Student feedback on their sense of belonging and engagement in school (n=364)**

	Baseline	Follow Up
Important to do the best I can	29.5% / 56.2%	45.2% / 34.6%
I learn to get along	45.0% / 38.8%	51.9% / 29.8%
I feel respected	41.7% / 32.4%	60.6% / 15.4%
Lots of things can do well	46.9% / 29.6%	46.2% / 18.3%
Other pupils accept me as I am	44.0% / 26.6%	51.9% / 25.0%
Feel I belong	37.4% / 31.5%	48.1% / 19.2%
Like many things about school	34.9% / 32.9%	36.5% / 23.1%
Good at school	41.7% / 22.0%	38.5% / 21.2%
Like being in school	28.6% / 27.4%	31.7% / 19.2%
Know how to cope	36.6% / 19.1%	39.4% / 14.4%
Really like to go	26.9% / 24.2%	23.1% / 24.0%
Look forward to school	25.3% / 26.5%	25.0% / 23.1%
Wish I didn't have to go to school	8.9%	12.5%
Feel unhappy	3.9%	2.9%

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree □ Don't agree or disagree ■ Don't agree ■ Strongly disagree

One of the eight follow-up only indicators for students also related to the extent to which Nurture had helped them with school engagement and belonging: 'I enjoy coming to school more because I attend Nurture'. Approximately 67% of students felt that, to a greater or lesser extent, this was true for them. This perspective was borne out in the qualitative data, with students pointing out that Nurture *"makes me feel a little bit better about going to school"* and that *"I've gotten happier attending Nurture".*

Figure 15: Student feedback on Nurture's impact on their school engagement (n=76[8])

Enjoy coming to school	11.5%	Mid point	20.5%	15.4%	30.8%

'Completely not true for you' ←——————→ 'Completely true for you'

At follow-up only, students were also asked about whether Nurture had helped them to get on with others in school. They were asked to indicate how true it was for them, that they 'enjoy sitting at a table and having something to eat with the teacher and other students', whether 'Nurture helps me to get on better with my classmates', and whether they 'get on better at school'. Students appeared to believe that Nurture has had a positive impact on their peer relationships, and relations with the teacher.

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[8] Due to an administrative error, not all children who were surveyed at follow up were asked some of these questions.

Figure 16: Student feedback on Nurture's impact on their relationship with peers (n=76[9])
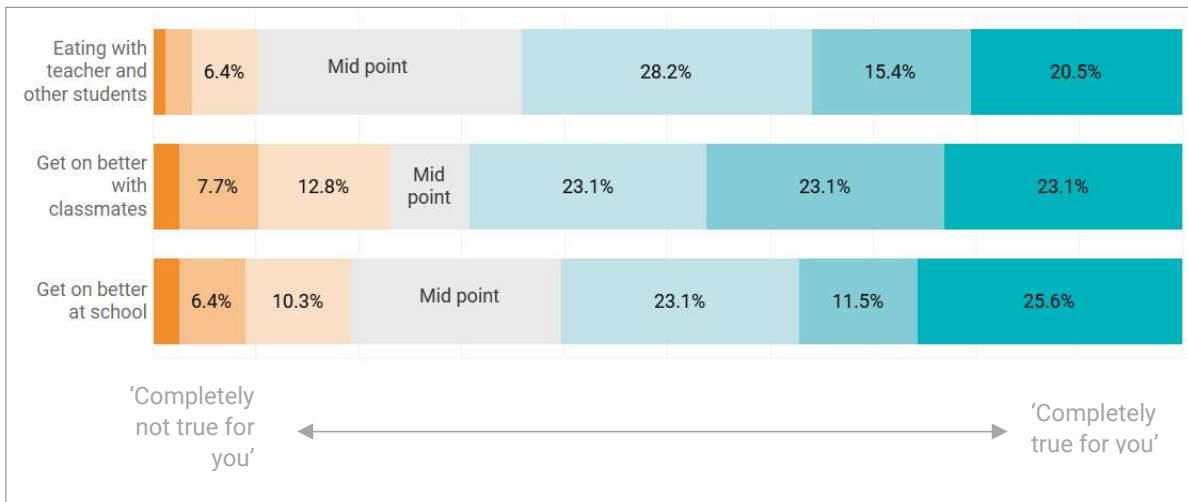
Qualitatively, students spontaneously highlighted their improved relationship with peers as a key benefit from being part of Nurture. For example, students say that they like *"being in a group"*, that *"I feel like I've gotten closer with other pupils in the school"*, they enjoy *"getting to know more people"* or that *"I like to be with my friends. I like getting to know them".* From the qualitative data, it would appear that the additional opportunity to make connections with other students is a main benefit of Nurture, from the student perspective.

Teachers also commented on the level to which children and young people's school engagement and belonging had improved following Nurture. The qualitative feedback from teachers pinpointed the area of school engagement as having been a particular benefit of the programme. In general, students were reported to be much happier coming to school, with subsequent positive impacts on their capacity to learn. As one teacher remarked *"A student who has been in a Nurture group from my experience wants to come to school and wants to attend Nurture group and engage with their classmates and teachers as they are more confident from being in the group and feel they belong. I have seen this first hand."* Another commented *"Nurture has developed students' confidence, attention and general happiness in class which ultimately makes them more comfortable in our learning environment".*

Improved relationships – with staff and with peers – were also seen by teachers as a key benefit of Nurture. These improved relationships had a number of knock-on benefits across a number of outcomes, including learning. One teacher stated that *"I think the students have a better relationship with a number of the adults in the school and are more willing to approach for help if they are having difficulty with something compared to before they joined the project".* These improved staff relationships also lead to better trust, which itself promotes a greater willingness to share and communicate, and in turn leads to improved learning: *"We have seen a huge improvement in the attitudes to learning from some children. Children have said that Nurture Group has been their lifeline and before access to this they didn't want to come to school. Now they feel school is easier for them and helps them a lot to engage with others".*

The findings are born out in the quantitative findings, where teachers were most likely to indicate that students 'are enjoying school more now', and that they 'get on better with their classmates as a result'.

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[9] Due to an administrative error, not all children who were surveyed at follow up were asked some of these questions.

Figure 17: Teacher/staff feedback on school belonging following Nurture (n=67)
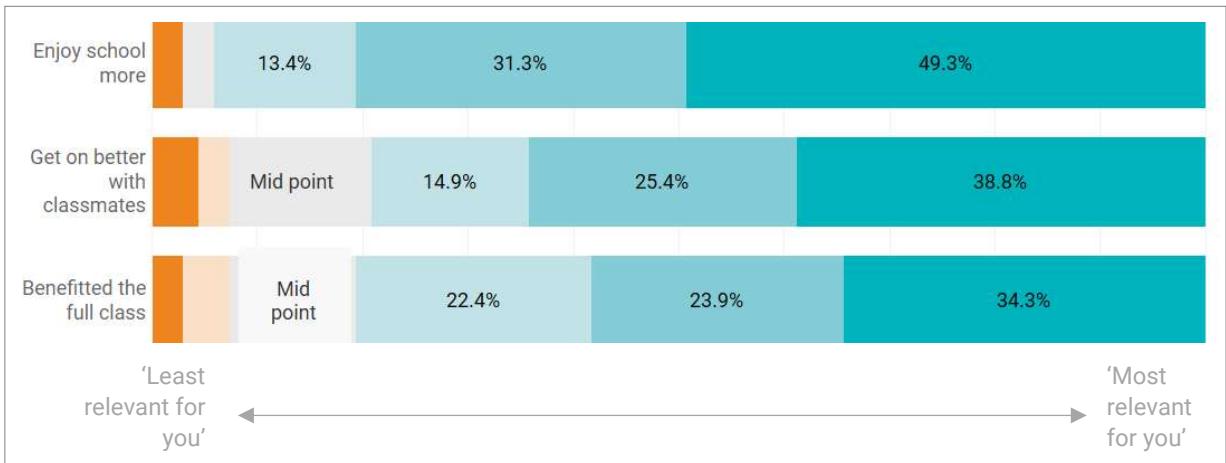
Teacher views on students' confidence levels were captured throughout the children's time in the Nurture programme, on a term by term basis. Teachers were asked to rate student confidence on a 5 point scale ranging from 1 "well below expectations" to 5 "well above expectations". A score of 3 denoted "in line with expectations". Note that there were 94 records for students from seven Cohort One schools with teacher ratings from at least two time points, which is somewhat low, given the number of students that are understood by Educate Together (anecdotally) to have participated in Nurture.

Figure 18 below shows that average students' confidence levels appear to increase for all those whose baseline confidence was either at or below the teacher's expectations. (Note that while baseline data was available for 94 students, there was a significant fall in the number of students over the course of six terms. It is not known if this relates to the varying amounts of time that students are spending in the programme, or whether this is, in fact, missing data).

Figure 18: Teacher/staff feedback on average student confidence levels (student n=94)
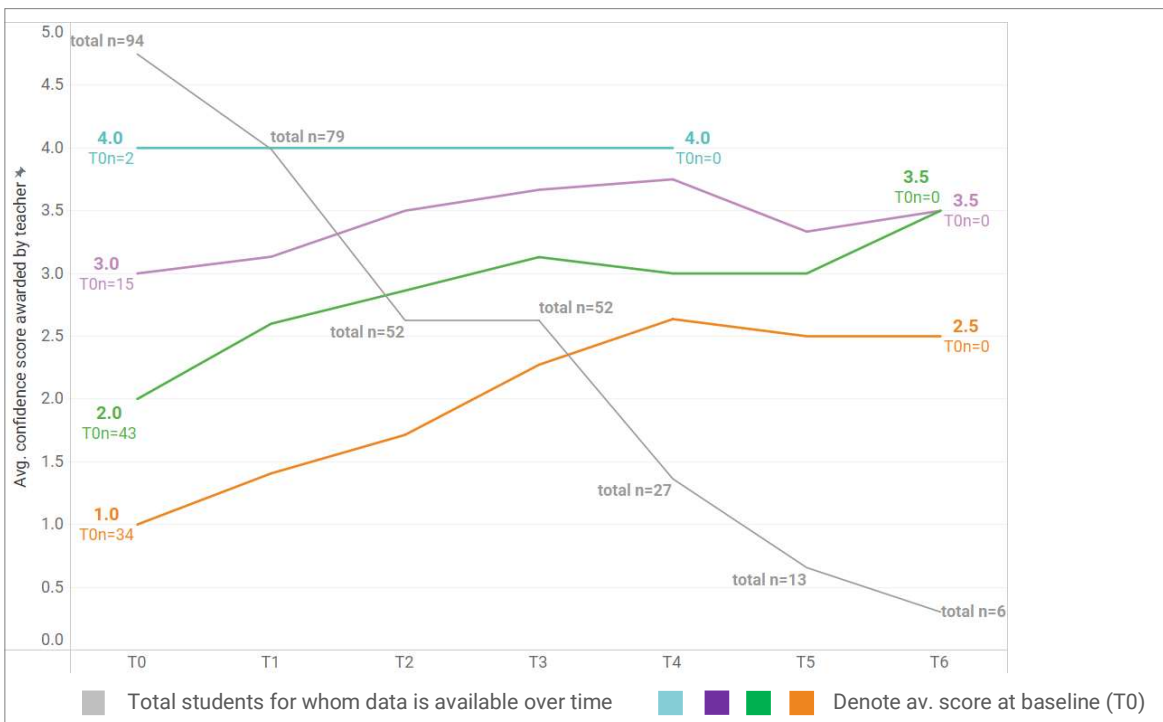
Attendance data is sometimes considered to be a measure of school engagement. Qualitatively, a number of teachers pointed to improvements in punctuality and attendance as being amongst the key benefits of Nurture. Quantitative attendance data is available for Nurture at two time points or more for 73 students across eight participating schools. Baseline attendance levels for these students ranged from 20% to 100%, with an average of 78%. Of these, almost half of

Nurture participants (47%, n=34) had increased their attendance levels in school at the final time point. The sample group's average attendance level had increased from 74% to 85% over their time in Nurture. A total of 23% (n=17) had decreased attendance at the final time point, while the attendance of 29% (n=21) experienced no change. Given that the group of students whose attendance increased is the largest, then this could be seen as a positive outcome for Nurture. (The group of students whose attendance decreased over the period of Nurture had much higher attendance levels at baseline than their counterparts in the other groups. Along with the natural variation in student attendance over the course of different terms, this is likely to explain some of the direction of change for this group).

Table 2 Average, minimum and maximum attendance levels for 3 groups of students at two time points (n=72)

		Baseline		Final time point	
Increased attenders	No. students/proportion of sample	35	48%	35	48%
	Average attendance level	74%	-	85%	-
	Min attendance level	20%	-	55%	-
	Max attendance level	93%		100%	-
Decreased attenders	No. students/proportion of sample	16	22%	16	22%
	Average attendance level	91%	-	83%	-
	Min attendance level	66%	-	47%	
	Max attendance level	100%		96%	
No change	No. students/proportion of sample	21	29%	21	29%
	Average attendance level	74%		-	
	Min attendance level	23%		-	
	Max attendance level	99%		-	

Figure 19 shows school attendance over time for the 17 students who were in the bottom quartile of attendance rates at baseline. The graph clearly shows how the attendance levels for these students either increased (n=10), or stayed the same (n=7), over their time in Nurture. The average increase in attendance level, for the 10 whose levels increased, was 21%.

Figure 19: Attendance rates over time of students with lowest baseline attendance (n=17)[10]


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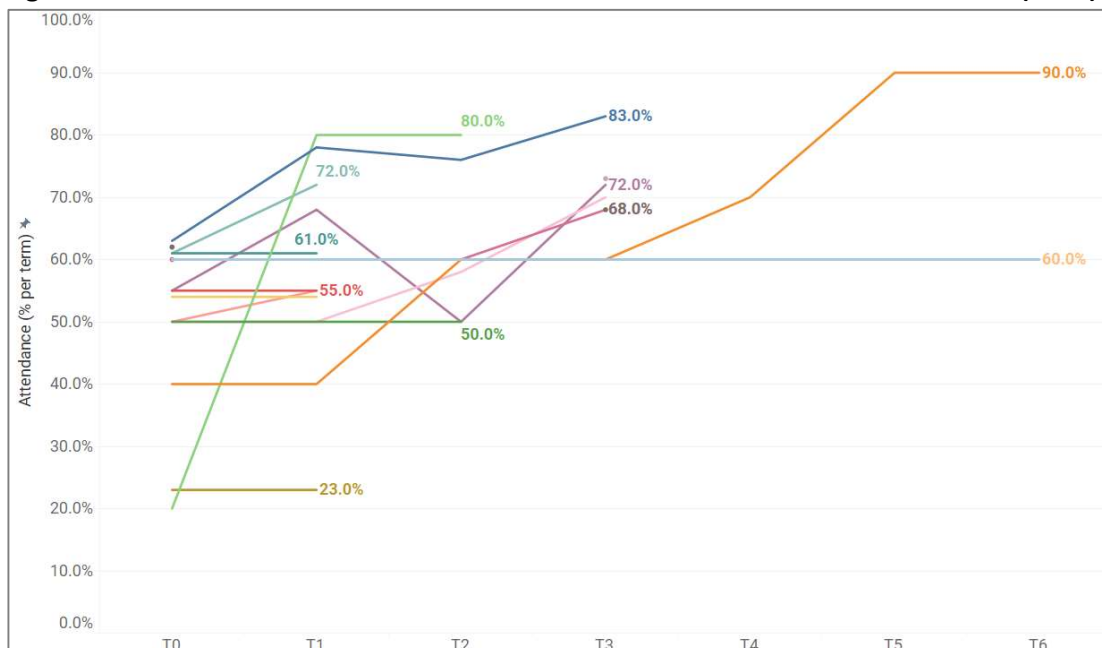
[10] The time period of student attendance data depends on their time spent in Nurture.

5.2.4 Educational outcomes

The main source of evidence to judge student educational outcomes over the course of the Nurture programme are the teacher's reports of student literacy and numeracy. As with teacher reports of confidence, these were marked on a 5 point scale from "well below expectations" to "well above expectations" (see Section 5.2.3). According to teachers across the seven Cohort One schools for which there is data, the literacy of all but the highest performing students at baseline increased over the first three terms of their involvement in Nurture. This represents the majority of students for whom data is available. For students remaining longer in the programme (that is, for whom scores are available at terms five and six), there is less positive change over time, although the students with the lowest scores at baseline do see an improvement over this extended time period. It is to be expected that students spending longer in Nurture are likely to be those students experiencing the most enduring challenges and this outcome should be viewed in that light. The data for numeracy shows a similar picture (see Figure 21). For numeracy, the score of the only lowest performing student at baseline who remained in the data at term six increased by a notable two points on the five-point scale.

Overall, for teacher-reported student literacy, average score at baseline was 2.1, rising to 2.6 at term three (when 52 students remained in the research) and again to 2.8 at term five, before falling slightly at term six. The pattern is similar for teacher-reported student numeracy, where the average score at baseline was also 2.1, rising to 2.7 at term three and on to 3.1 at term five, followed by a fall for term six.

Figure 20: Teacher/staff feedback on average student literacy levels (student n=94)
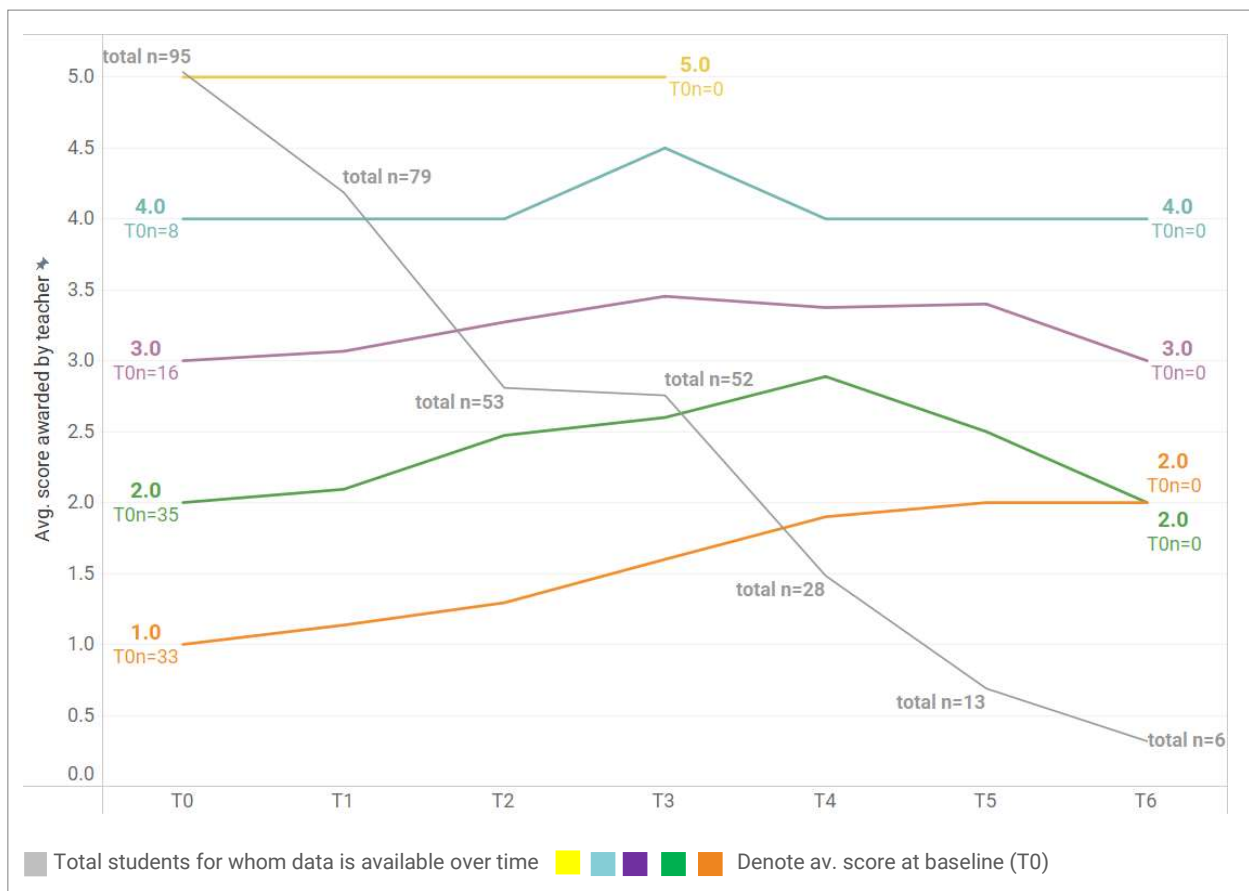
Figure 21: Teacher/staff feedback on average student numeracy levels (student n=95)
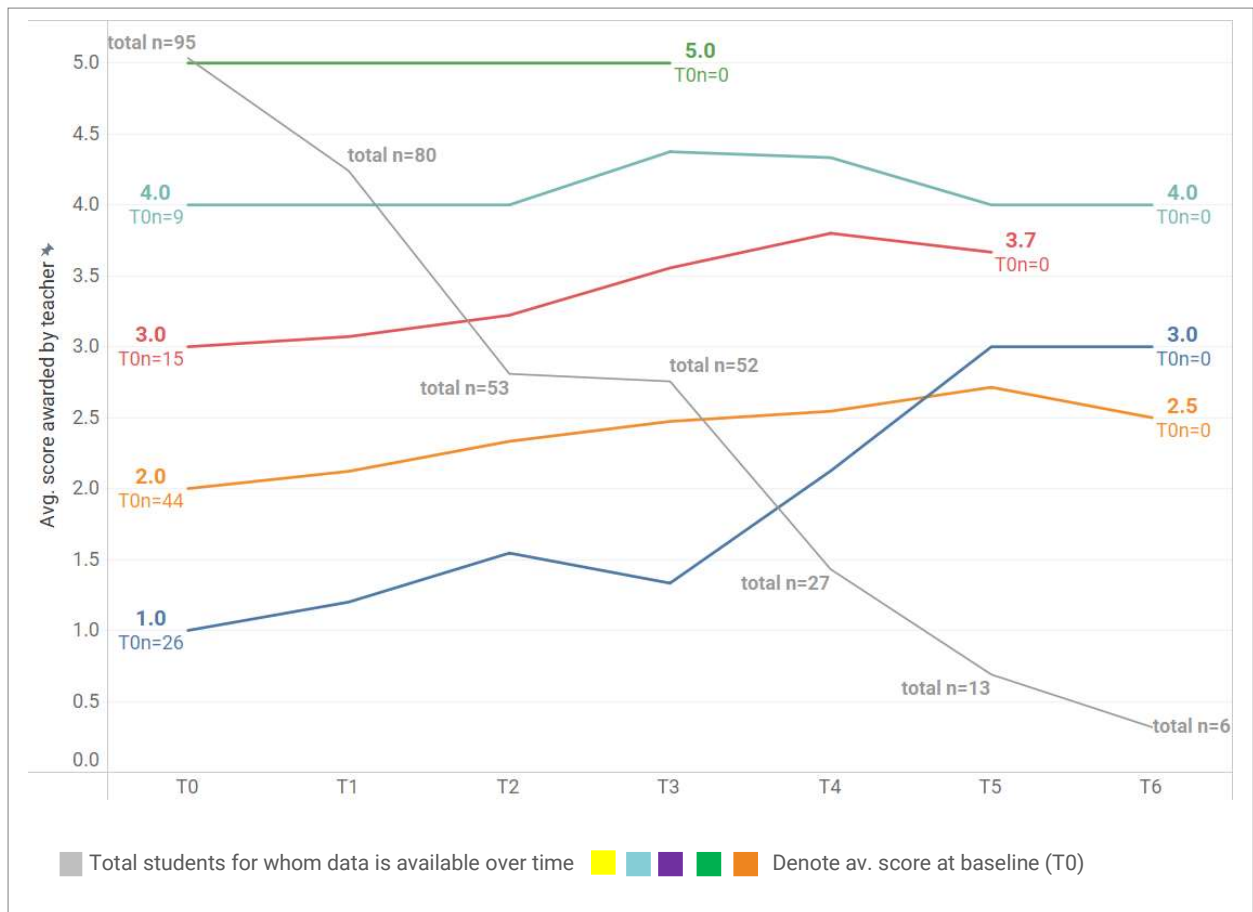
Students were also asked to rate their learning in school on several dimensions at both baseline and follow-up. Unlike the teacher responses, students' own assessment of their learning in school over the course of Nurture seems to imply that they feel there has been little change, and indeed a decrease in their assessment on some dimensions (however, note again that the allocation of students to either baseline or follow-up groups was confused due to some administrative challenges, and this is likely to have impacted on the reliability of this finding).

Qualitatively, students did not tend to spontaneously focus on this element of the potential benefits of Nurture, preferring to focus on the food, the fun they have, and the opportunity to mix with other students.

Figure 22: Student feedback regarding their own learning in school (n=364)
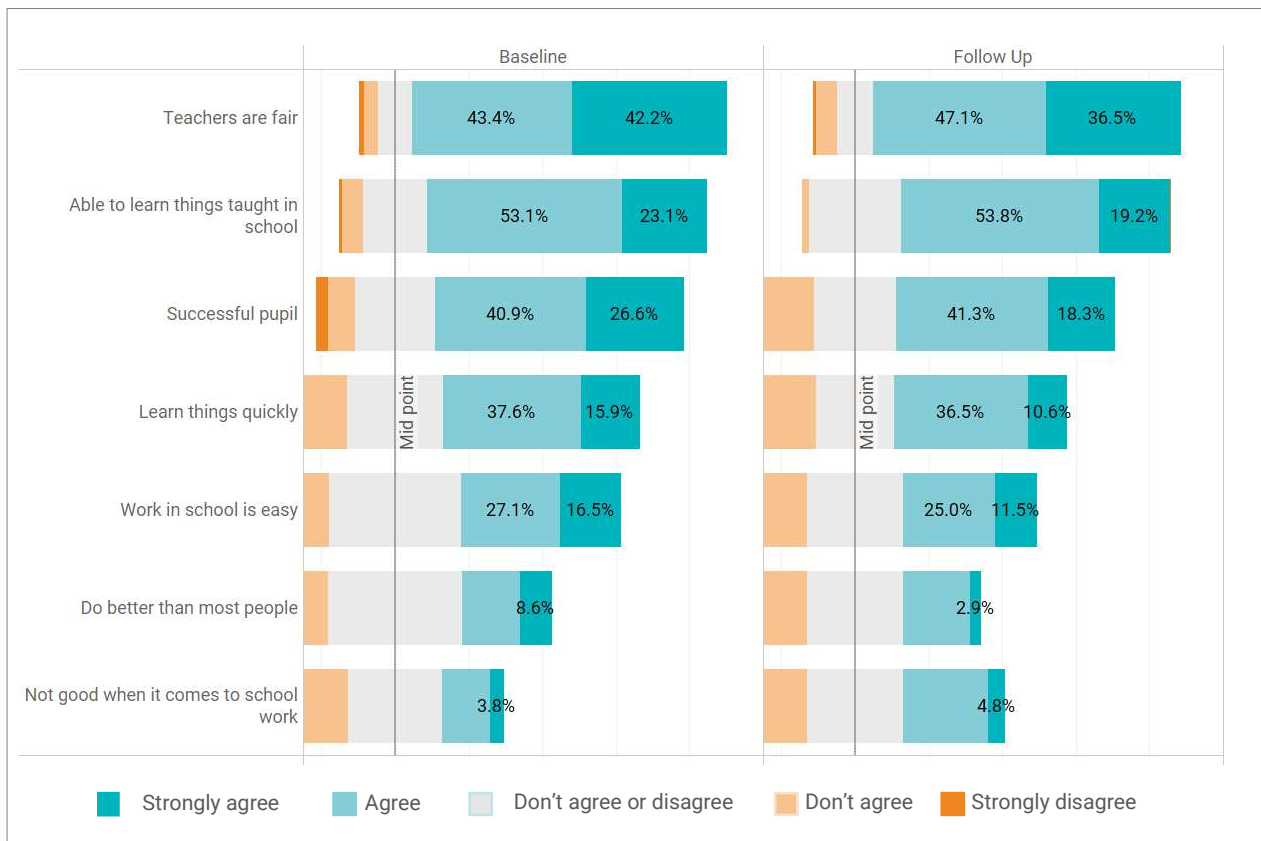
5.2.5 *Teacher capacity to support students with socio-emotional or behavioural difficulties*

Combining the original follow-up surveys to the T&P and Wholeschool training, together with the December 2022 follow-up survey, gives a sample of feedback from 114 teachers at baseline and 71 at follow-up (167 individual teachers in total). The data includes teachers who may have only responded at baseline or at follow-up, or who have responded at both stages. However, in this data, care has been taken that no teacher is duplicated within the baseline or follow-up groups.

The data clearly shows how teachers' average confidence in their own capacity to support students with socio-emotional or behavioural difficulties has increased during their involvement with Nurture. Across the seven selected indicators of teacher capacity that were measured at baseline and follow-up, the average score (out of 10) increased by one full point from an average of 7.45 to an average of 8.37 after participation in the programme. Over the course of their training, teachers and staff feel, in particular, that they have developed a good understanding of educational disadvantage and of the Nurture approach, with their average confidence rising from 6.84 to 8.56. They were least confident at baseline about their skills to support students who are educationally disadvantaged, but on this measure, as well as the others, their assessment of their abilities has increased during training in and implementation of Nurture. Teacher responses to questions relating to increased understanding of the benefits of Nurture, of students facing educational disadvantage and of the barriers experienced by those students, were the most likely to increase over the course of Nurture. Teacher ratings of their confidence that Nurture will lead to better student engagement, and of their skills to support students, increased the least over time, although they did increase.

Figure 23: Teacher/staff feedback on their confidence with Nurture concepts and their skills to implement them (n=167)

Qualitatively, teachers and staff appear to feel that the programme has helped them to develop a better understanding of educational disadvantage and its impact on educational outcomes for students. They appreciate the opportunity that the programme presented for them to reflect, both individually and collectively, on how school can be made a more welcoming place for all children. Many pointed to the 'shift in mindset' or 'changed perspective' that the course had brought for them, while others felt that it gave them a 'structure' or a theoretical basis for practices which they had already learned through many years of teaching. It was in the area of greater understanding and appreciation of the wider factors impacting on a student's learning outcomes that teachers and staff seemed to feel that Nurture had made the biggest impact. A key learning that many highlighted was how the socio-emotional influenced the academic, and how *"children cannot learn if they are not happy"* or how *"t*he social and the emotional fundamentals need to be in place before any learning can take place".* They also commonly pointed to the insight they had gained from the training, that challenging behaviour can be a form of communication for a child or young person.

Alongside these key learning points which seem to have resonated strongly with respondents, many also pointed to changes in their practice which the programme had brought about. For example, a large number of teacher / staff respondents said that they now take a moment to consider what might be behind a child's behaviour: *"Although I have always considered myself to be a patient person and a natural caregiver, the major change that I see in myself is that when I see a behaviour now I take a step back and think before reacting".*

Teachers and staff also highlighted some of the practical tools and ideas that the Nurture training had offered them. Many felt that these were relevant and were able to apply them in their work.

There were only a very small handful of negative comments from teachers and staff regarding Nurture. A very small number seemed to doubt that the approach had something to offer them, that they were not already doing. A small number also fully endorsed the approach, but didn't yet feel that they had the skills, either through training or their own experience, to put it into practice.

6. Conclusion

Despite the limitations of an evaluation based purely on secondary analysis of administrative data, and some issues with the quality of data available, it is nevertheless possible to make a topline assessment of the Nurture programme under the four research questions outlined in Section 4. A summary of this assessment has already been outlined in Section 2, but some points merit reinforcement.

It is very apparent from the student feedback, and from teacher reports, that participating students very much enjoy attending Nurture. Students' enjoyment of this aspect of school life comes through particularly vividly in their qualitative responses to the open survey questions. It is also illustrated from the many positive stories which teachers describe, anecdotally, in their qualitative responses. However, while children may enjoy their time in the Nurture group, it is not a given that this will lead to their wider enjoyment of school, or indeed to the other outcomes sought from the Nurture approach, which include improving child social, emotional and behavioural development, and increasing their ability to learn. These are more challenging outcomes to explore, but it is these wider impacts which, guided by four research questions, this evaluation has sought to assess.

The assessment has shown that, during participation in Nurture, student enjoyment of school in general, as well as the Nurture groups, increases, as evidenced in their own feedback and echoed in teacher and staff responses. Relatedly, students' school attendance levels increase, especially for those students with particularly low attendance at baseline. Their relationships with teachers, and with their peers, measured through self-report and teacher feedback, have improved. Their academic outcomes, and self-confidence, measured through teacher-reported literacy and numeracy, improve. Of particular interest is that their Boxall Profile scores, both Developmental and Diagnostic, indicate positive change in their socio-emotional development during their participation in the programme.

Finally, teachers self-reported capacity to support students with socio-emotional or behavioural difficulties, or who are at risk of educational disadvantage, has increased over the course of Nurture. This holds particularly true for their knowledge of key concepts associated with these issues, and their understanding of the Nurture approach. It is also true, but to a lesser extent, for their confidence in their own skills to implement the Nurture approach in future.

In conclusion, these are positive findings for the Educate Together Nurture programme. They show how the programme is associated with positive impacts across the range of outcomes sought, which are particularly positive given the challenging context of Covid in which Nurture was implemented in Irish schools. The findings endorse, for the Irish context, the evidence already gathered through the considerable body of high quality, peer-reviewed literature referred to in the Nurture programme Strategic Plan (Educate Together, 2022), which has already shown the positive impacts of the Nurture approach in other jurisdictions. Ultimately, the findings suggest that, if resources were available, there would be a clear benefit to rolling out the Nurture approach more widely across the Educate Together network of schools in future.

7. Recommendations

The focus of this evaluation has been on impact rather than process, and consequently it is not possible to make recommendations around implementation. However, it is worth reiterating that the evidence presented over the course of this assessment, taken together with the existing literature around the Nurture approach, points to the potential benefit of Educate Together continuing with its Nurture programme, and indeed of a roll out more widely across the Irish education system.

As the Nurture Programme Strategy (2022) itself states, "The positive impacts of the Nurture approach have been well documented by international research over the last two decades." Much of this research is high quality, peer-reviewed analysis and, to a large extent, the case for the Nurture approach at this stage has been comprehensively made. This evaluation simply echoes the findings from this existing literature, albeit for the first time focusing on schools in the Republic of Ireland. It shows how the issue of poor educational outcomes for disadvantaged students, often deemed to be a highly intransigent policy issue, can in fact be addressed, where resources allow.

Based on a preliminary review of this literature, however, there are still questions which research could usefully answer. These relate more specifically to issues concerning fidelity of implementation to the principles of Nurture and the relationship between the variety of implementation models and child outcomes. They relate also to any possible differential in the potential benefits to different groups of children, for example, by gender, ethnicity, disability status etc, or between different types of school. Research into these differential effects has already begun in other jurisdictions (Sloan et al., 2020). However, these are questions that would be highly relevant to a consideration of the implementation of Nurture within the Irish context, but which it has not been possible to probe within the scope of the current evaluation. In summary, Irish research could usefully contribute to the discussion of what constitutes a 'high quality' Nurture implementation, and identify what barriers and enablers are in place specifically within the Irish context to facilitate or hinder this approach. Based on this analysis, research could help to answer the question of where limited resources – what types of schools, which children - might best be focused to ensure the best use is made of any available investment.

Appendix One: Theory and Practice Online Training ('21) - Feedback

A1.1 Introduction

The roll out of Nurture Theory and Practice (T&P) training was the second stage of the Nurture project, following on from the recruitment of the first cohort of participating schools, which had commenced in late 2020. The initial T&P training was delivered on behalf of Educate Together by Nurturing Schools Ireland, and was the first initiative to be rolled out to schools as part of the Nurture project. The training took place in early 2021, and the survey data below was collected subsequently via online survey. The timing of the training, which coincided with a renewed closure of schools in January 2021 as a result of Covid, meant that the course had to be brought online at short notice. Surveys were distributed following the training, in April 2021, to the initial two groups of training participants, by Nurturing Schools Ireland, on behalf of Educate Together.

A1.2 Survey response

A total of 53 participants (approximately two from each of the 29 participating schools) enrolled in the initial T&P training in early 2021. Of those, approximately 34% (n=18) responded to the request for feedback. This response rate is somewhat low, and ideally this feedback data would represent the views of a larger proportion of training participants.

In total, 74% (n=39) of training participants were based in primary schools and the remainder in post-primary schools. In comparison, 72% (n=13) of respondents came from primary schools, which is an indicator that the sample of respondents bears some resemblance to the full population of training participants. However, note that only 10 of the 29 participating schools are represented in the sample of participants giving their feedback. Class and subject teachers make up the majority of respondents. Principals are also well represented.

Table 3 T and P Training feedback respondents by primary / post-primary

School patron and level		n	%
Educate Together, primary	Broombridge ETNS	1	5.6%
	Harcourt Tce ETNS	1	5.6%
	Holywell ETNS	2	11.1%
	Malahide Portmarnock ETNS	1	5.6%
	Mullingar ETNS	1	5.6%
	Powerstown ETNS	2	11.1%
	Rathcoole ETNS	1	5.6%
	Tuam ETNS	1	5.6%
	Not given	3	16.7%
	Subtotal	**13**	
Educate together, post-primary	Bremore ETSS	2	11.1%
	Hansfield ETSS	2	11.1%
	Not given	1	5.6%
	Subtotal	**5**	
TOTAL		**18**	**100%**

Table 4 T and P Training feedback respondents by school role

| Role	n	%
Teacher	12	66.7%
Principal	2	11.1%
ANA	1	5.6%
Other	3	16.7%
TOTAL	**18**	**100%**

A1.3 Overview of findings

In general, participants from both primary and post-primary schools found the training to be either 'helpful' or 'very helpful'. Nobody indicated that it was 'not very helpful'. While only one of the 18 respondents said that they would rate the quality of the workshop series as 'excellent', 12 indicated that they would rate it as 'very good' and a further two participants as 'good'. Participants were most positive about the content of the course, and the opportunities for interaction online with the facilitators and other participants. The structure of the workshop was the factor which received the least positive rating. This feedback could be viewed in light of the qualitative commentary which underlined the challenges of taking a three-hour course online after a full day of teaching. Only one factor – the use of time in the workshops - received a rating of 'poor' from any participant.
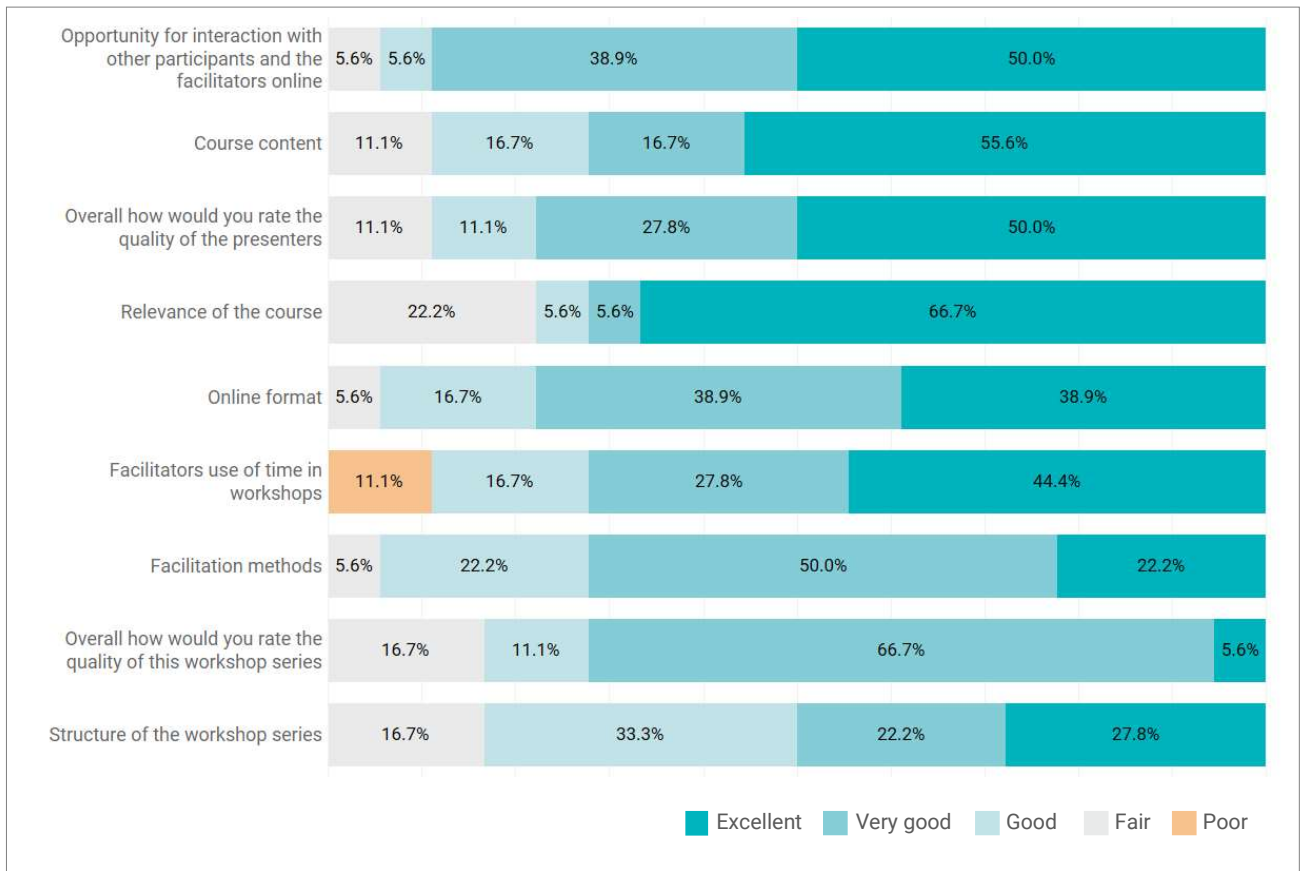
Amongst the course content that participants found most useful were learnings around the foundation and rationale for the Nurture approach, information about the Boxall profile, practical information about implementing Nurture 'on the ground', and the shared experience of those already working in the field. In short, both theory *and* practical advice were appreciated by the participants, although on balance it seems that participants would have preferred a little more focus on the practical side. Most, but not all participants felt that the course had prepared them well for establishing Nurture in their schools, and in their general comments, most participants were very positive about the training.

A1.4 Quantitative analysis

Figure 24: 'Have you found the course . . ' (n=18)
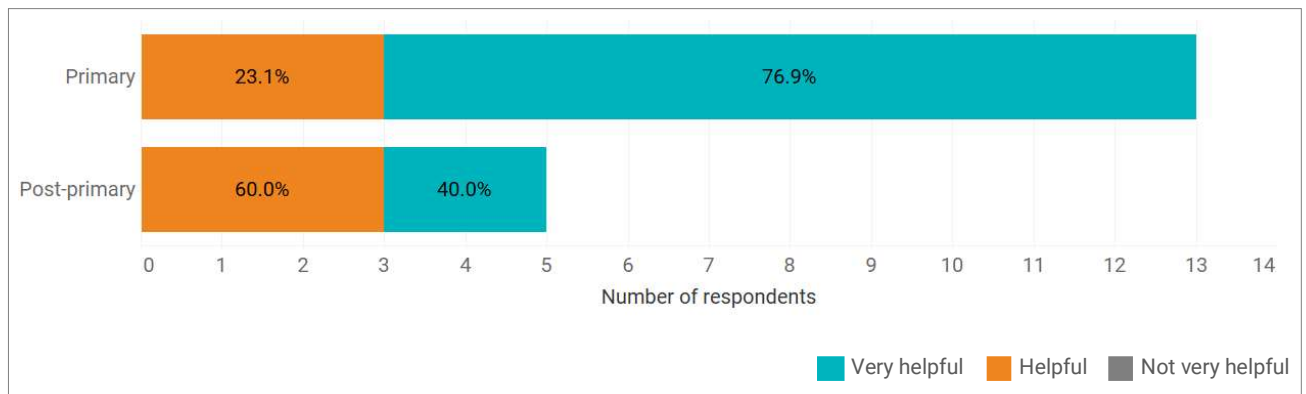
Figure 25: 'Please rate the workshop series under each of the headings below by selecting an option' (n=18) (question items ranked in the chart by average score)

Question item	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Opportunity for interaction with other participants and the facilitators online	50.0%	38.9%		5.6%	5.6%
Course content	55.6%	16.7%	16.7%	11.1%	
Overall how would you rate the quality of the presenters	50.0%	27.8%	11.1%	11.1%	
Relevance of the course	66.7%	5.6%	5.6%	22.2%	
Online format	38.9%	38.9%	16.7%	5.6%	
Facilitators use of time in workshops	44.4%	27.8%	16.7%		11.1%
Facilitation methods	22.2%	50.0%	22.2%	5.6%	
Overall how would you rate the quality of this workshop series	5.6%	66.7%	11.1%	16.7%	
Structure of the workshop series	27.8%	22.2%	33.3%	16.7%	

Appendix Two: Trauma Informed Practice Online Module ('22) - Feedback

A2.1 Introduction

The Trauma Informed Practice online training module was developed as a general introduction to trauma informed practice (TIP), to enable teachers to understand the impact of trauma on young people in the classroom. It took place under the umbrella of the Nurture project. The course was structured as five units giving an overview of types of trauma and their impact on the brain and behaviour. It was made available online from March 2022 (it remains available online as an asynchronous training module). The module took approximately two hours for each participant to complete, in their own time. The training was developed and delivered on behalf of Educate Together by Quality Matters.

The TIP online module was advertised initially to schools participating within the Nurture project, and later more widely across the Educate Together network. Consequently, 52% of all respondents came from these schools. When the war in Ukraine commenced, Educate Together offered the module to schools outside of its network.

Two surveys were distributed to those who registered for the module, one to collect preliminary data immediately following participation in the course ('baseline'), and a second which was distributed some time later ('follow-up').

A2.2 Survey response

Tables 5 and 6 below show the level of response to the two surveys. A total of 84 different individuals responded at one or other timepoint, of whom 83% were female. These 84 respondents represent 24% of all those (n=353) who have taken the training module to date. The largest proportion of respondents to the surveys came from Educate Together post-primary schools, and the second largest from primary schools with religious patrons. The extent to which this reflects the breakdown of participants in the overall population of participants in this training is not known. Most respondents were class or subject teachers. Staff from senior roles (Principals and Deputy Principals) were comparatively well represented in the data.

Table 5 TIP Module feedback respondents by school patron and level (n=84)[11]

School patron		Baseline		Follow-up	
Educate Together	Primary	7	8.5%	0	
	Post-primary	36	43.9%	7	58.3%
Religious organisation	Primary	21	25.6%	4	33.3%
	Post-primary	1	1.2%	0	
Not given	Primary	10	12.2%	0	
	Post-primary	2	2.4%	0	
	Not given	2	2.4%	0	
Not applicable	Primary	1	1.2%	0	
	Post-primary	0	0%	0	
	Not given	2	2.4%	1	8.3%
TOTAL		**82**	**100%**	**12**	**100%**

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[11] Note that some individuals completed both baseline and follow-up surveys.

The low number of responses to the baseline and in particular the follow-up survey (which relates to only 3.4% (n=12) of those who have completed the training, but a somewhat larger 14.6% of those who completed the baseline survey[12]) should be noted when considering the following analyses.

Table 6 TIP Module feedback respondents by school role (n=84)

Role	Baseline		Follow-up	
Teacher	43	52.4%	4	33.3%
ANA	13	15.9%	4	33.3%
SET	7	8.5%	1	8.3%
Other	5	6.1%	1	8.3%
Deputy Principal	3	3.7%	1	8.3%
Principal	2	2.4%	1	8.3%
EAL Teacher	2	2.4%	0	0%
Assistant Principal	1	1.2%	0	0%
Behaviour support	1	1.2%	0	0%
Guidance Counsellor	1	1.2%	0	0%
Home School Community Liaison	1	1.2%	0	0%
Learning support teacher	1	1.2%	0	0%
Secretary / administration	1	1.2%	0	0%
Special class teacher	1	1.2%	0	0%
TOTAL	82	100%	12	100%

A2.3 Overview of findings

The qualitative feedback to the surveys indicates that the training was received positively by participants, with many describing it as 'excellent' or 'informative' (27 participants offered a qualitative response).

Across all four aspects of 'understanding and awareness of trauma informed practice' highlighted in the survey, and to the extent that the 12 'follow-up' responses can be deemed as representative of all participants, it seems that participants felt they had a greater understanding of TIP immediately following the course. This understanding improved again in the period between the two surveys. A notable >90% of primary and post-primary felt more confident with TIP immediately following the course.

In general, post-primary respondents were more likely to adapt their response to dysregulated behaviour than primary teachers, both immediately after the course and subsequently (note that all post-primary respondents were in schools within the Educate Together network). Once again, to the extent that the 12 'follow-up' responses can be deemed as representative of all participants, it seems that educators were more likely to adopt a trauma informed approach to students' dysregulated behaviour following the course.

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[12] The follow-up survey was only distributed to those who had contributed at baseline.

A2.4 Quantitative analysis

Figure 26: 'On a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 is the lowest and 7 is the highest) please rate your level of understanding and awareness of Trauma Informed Practice' (n=84)
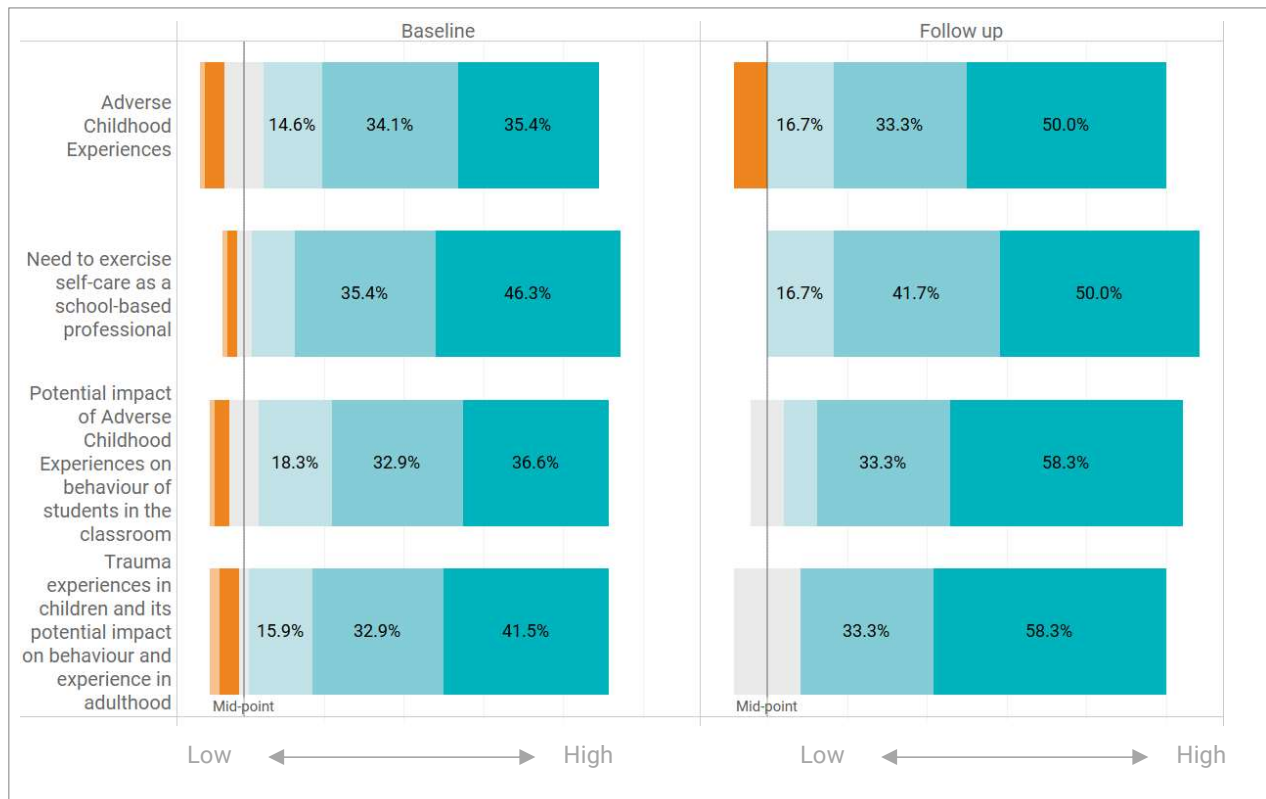
Figure 27: 'Thinking about adopting a trauma informed approach with students and having completed this online module, do you feel less confident than before you started the module; feel there is no difference in your confidence, or more confident?' (n=84)
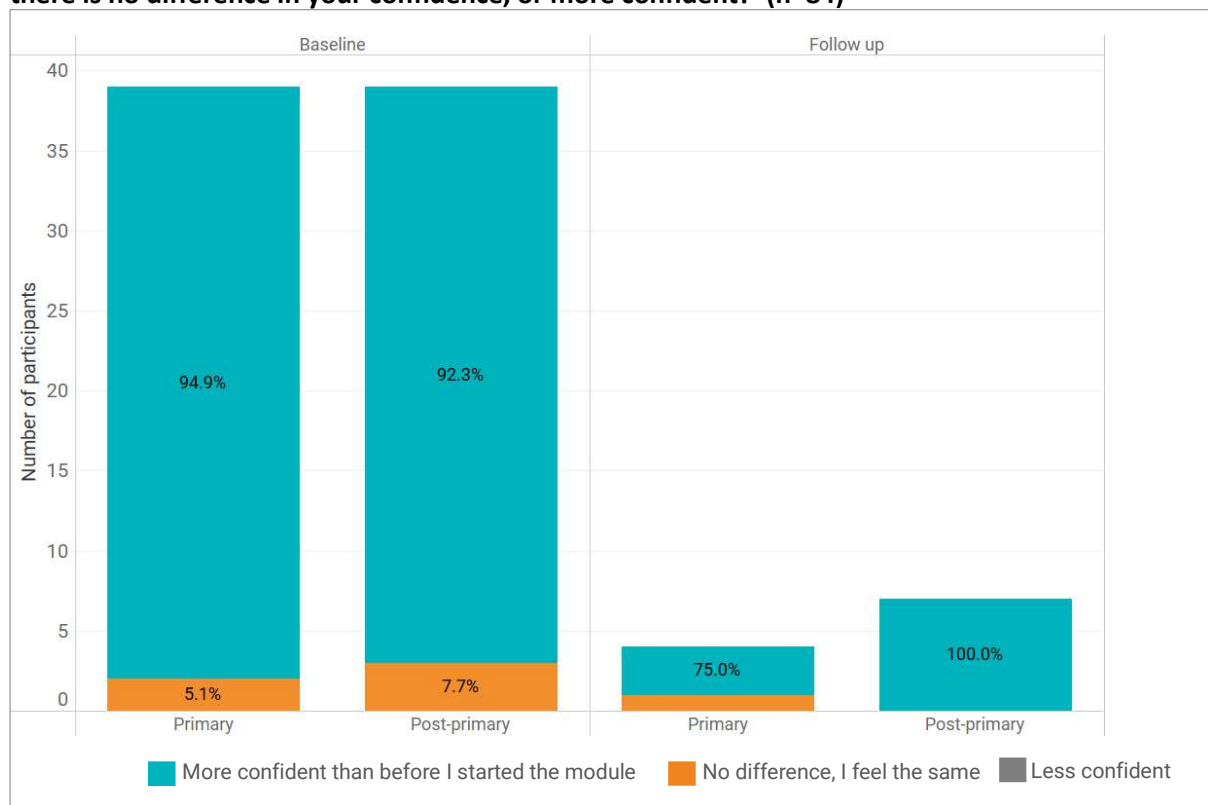
Figure 28: 'Currently, how frequently do you adapt your response to dysregulated behaviour by students in terms of your understanding of the potential impact of trauma?' (n=84)[13]

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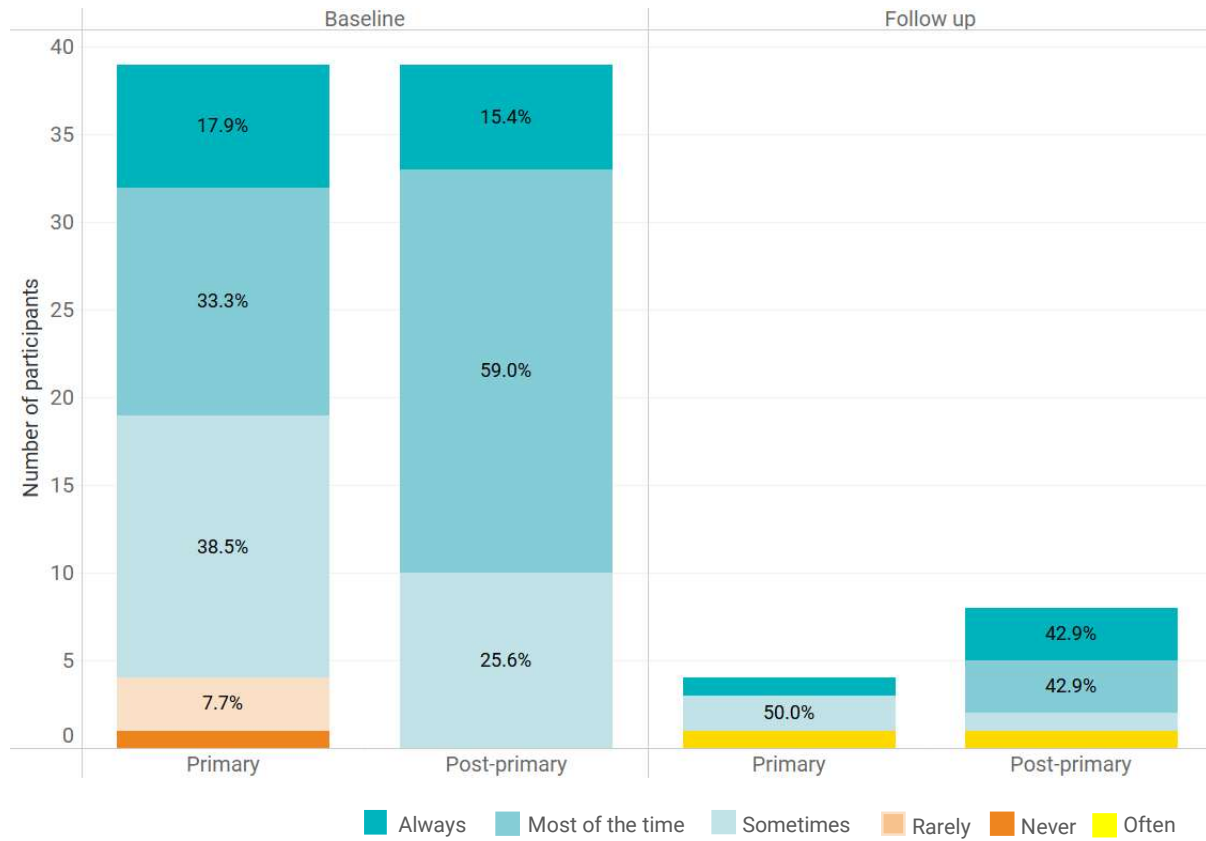
[13] Note that an additional category 'often' was included in the follow-up survey, that was not available in the baseline survey.

Appendix Three: Location of Participating Schools

Figure 29: Map of participating schools (n=27)
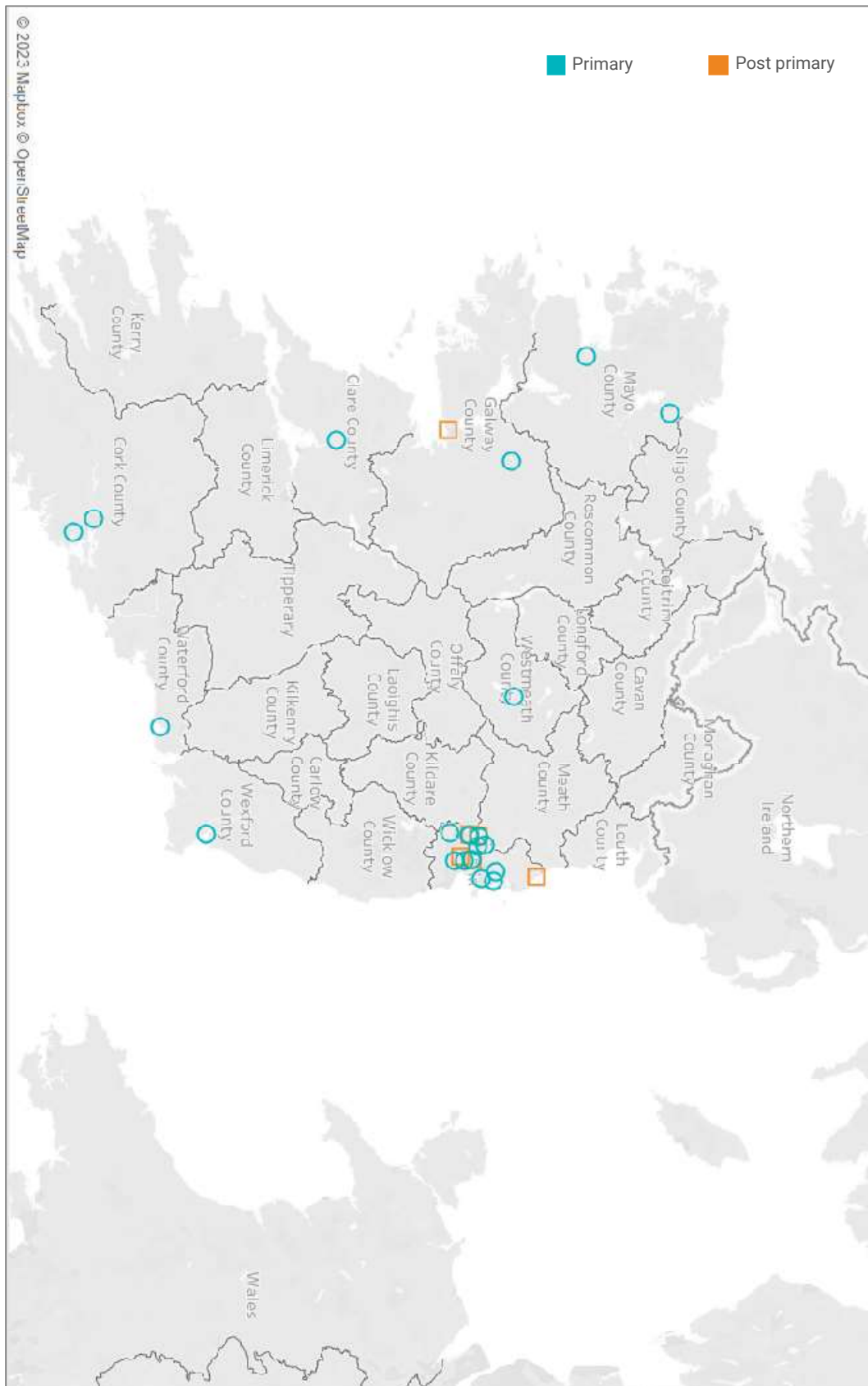
Appendix Four: References

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