Parent Questionnaire – March/April 2020

1.   Introduction

On March 12th 2020, the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar announced that in order to contain the spread of Covid-19 that all schools would close down with effect from 6pm that day. The school closure occurred very suddenly, giving school communities very limited time to prepare.

In Scoil San Treasa, the children's learning is of paramount importance. Therefore, in these unprecedented circumstances, the provision of continuity of education and learning is naturally a key priority. On an ongoing basis, in Scoil San Treasa we reflect on the teaching and learning in our school – considering what we do well and what areas we might strengthen and develop further. This approach of reflective practice is embedded in our school. We are mindful too of the various opportunities, challenges, strengths and opportunities that prevail in any given time.

In the prevailing COVID-19 environment therefore, a decision was made to carry out small scale research in order to proactively assist our school in adapting most effectively to the changing situation. All parents were invited to complete a short questionnaire for each of their children in the school.

It is important to note that the questionnaire was created in late March 2020 in the context of an anticipated short term closure. Similarly, parent responses and opinion were from the perspective of a short term closure. Since then, the school's response has addressed the material aspects of the feedback in an effort to support our whole school community (e.g. pupils, staff, parents, leaders) in equal measure.

The objective was twofold. Firstly it aimed to gather some information on how learning is happening at home, what is working well, and to try and obtain a general overview of the amount, type and frequency of work for each class level that parents felt was important and appropriate.

Secondly, it aimed to establish the level of access to devices in homes and parental opinion on the use of same in remote learning. Parents were also invited to provide comments and suggestions in an effort to assist the school in trying to achieve a workable and balanced approach in adapting to the change.

It is hoped that the outcome of the survey will help enable our school to put provisions in place that support all in our school community (e.g. pupils, staff, parents, leaders) in equal measure.

We acknowledge the high level of engagement with this consultative process across the school community. All names will be deleted from our records once the questionnaires have been processed, and not later than the end of June 2020.

2. Demographics

A total of 279 responses were submitted. As parents were invited to submit a response for each of their children in the school, this number of responses represents 175 of the 285 families in Scoil San Treasa.
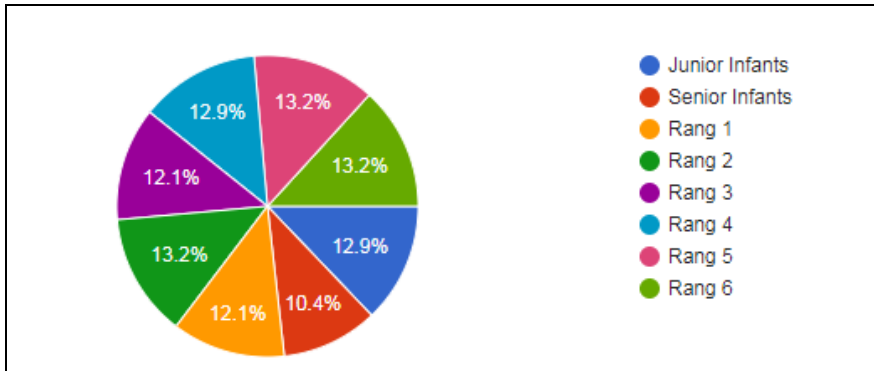

Figure 1: Class levels represented in the questionnaire

3. Parent Questionnaire

3.1 Work

3.1.1 Question: How would you describe the amount of work that has been assigned to your child since the school closure?

76% of respondents indicated that the amount of work assigned to their child has been **appropriate**.
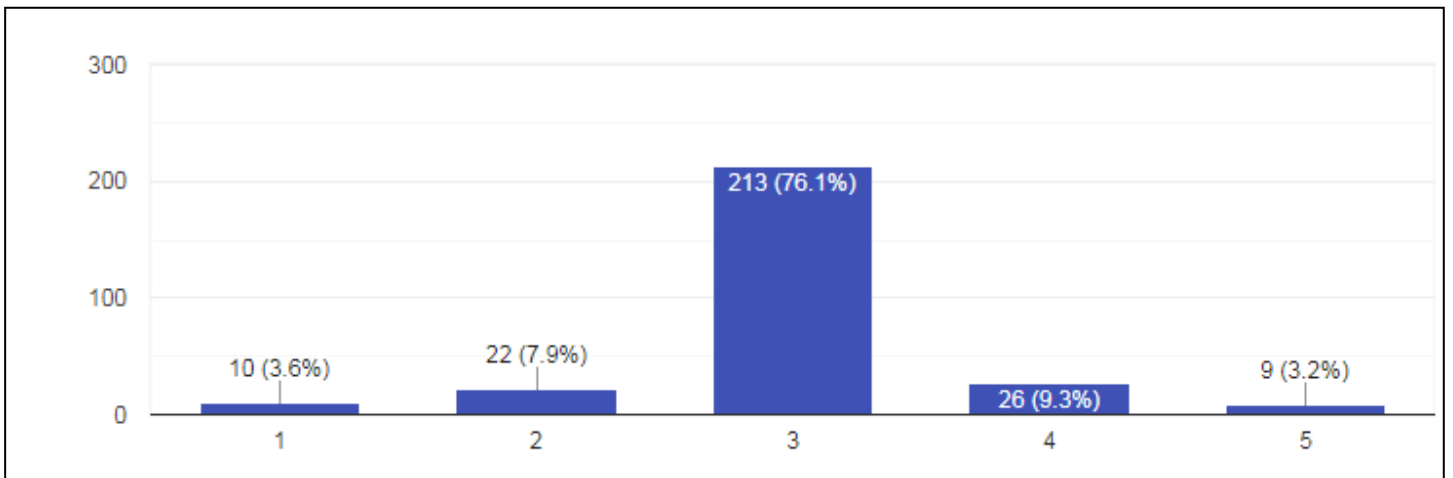

Figure 2: Amount of work assigned to pupils. (1= "Too little"; 3 = "Appropriate"; 5= "Too much")

3.1.2 Question: How many different lessons/tasks/exercises would you like assigned each day?

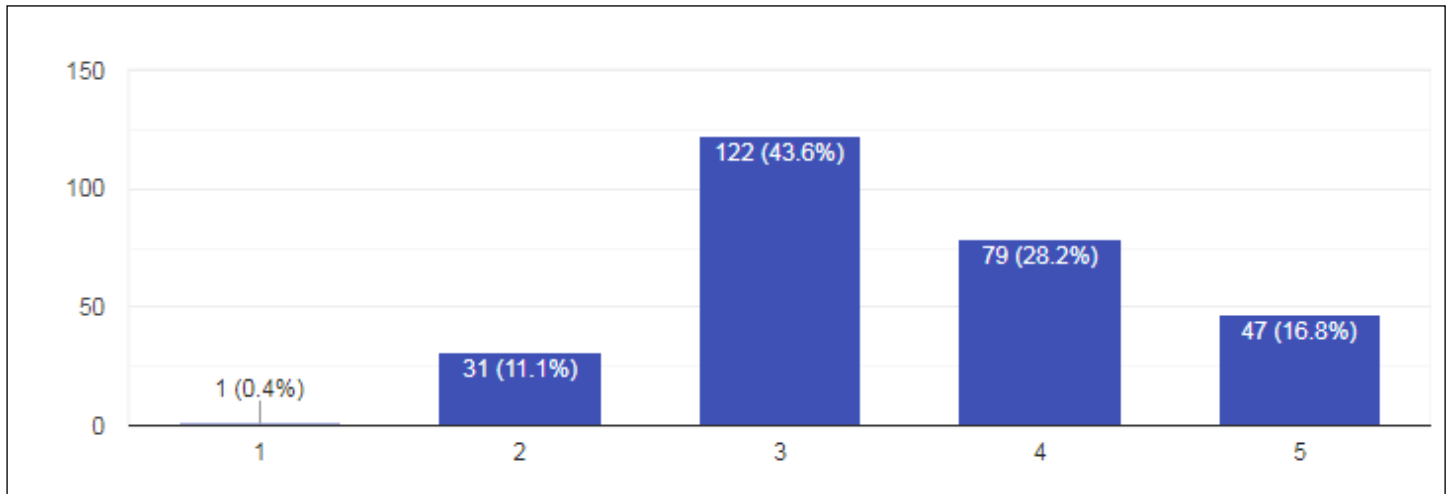**72%** of respondents suggested that **3 - 4 tasks** are assigned per day.

Figure 3: Number of tasks per day

3.1.3 Question: Please indicate the amount of work time per day you feel is appropriate/manageable for your child.

- Junior Infants: **75%** of respondents felt **30 minutes - 1 hour** was appropriate.
- Senior Infants: **72%** of respondents felt **1 - 2 hours** was appropriate.
- 1st class: **76%** of respondents felt **1 - 2 hours** was appropriate.
- 2nd class: **70%** of respondents felt **1 -2 hours** was appropriate.
- 3rd class: **76%** of respondents felt **1 - 2 hours** was appropriate.
- 4th class: **75%** of respondents felt **2 - 3 hours** was appropriate.
- 5th class: **81%** of respondents felt **2 - 3 hours** was appropriate.
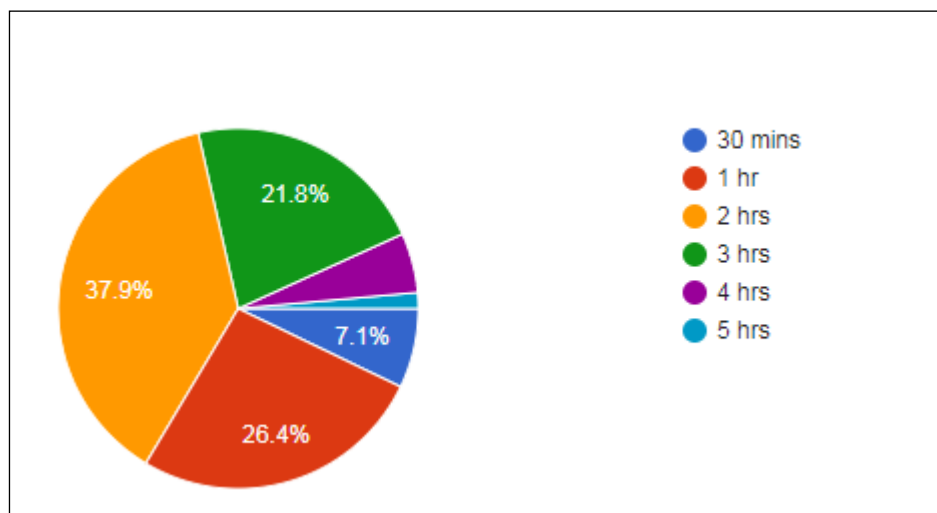- 6th class: **70%** of respondents felt **2 - 3 hours** was appropriate.

Figure 4: Length of work time per day per class

3.1.4 Question: Choose up to four types of work that you would like to see regularly assigned to your child?

- Textbook Exercises 72%
- Reading 71%
- Story Writing/Essays 53%
- Rote Learning (tables, concepts, spellings) 45%
- Artistic Work 41%
- Project Work 40%
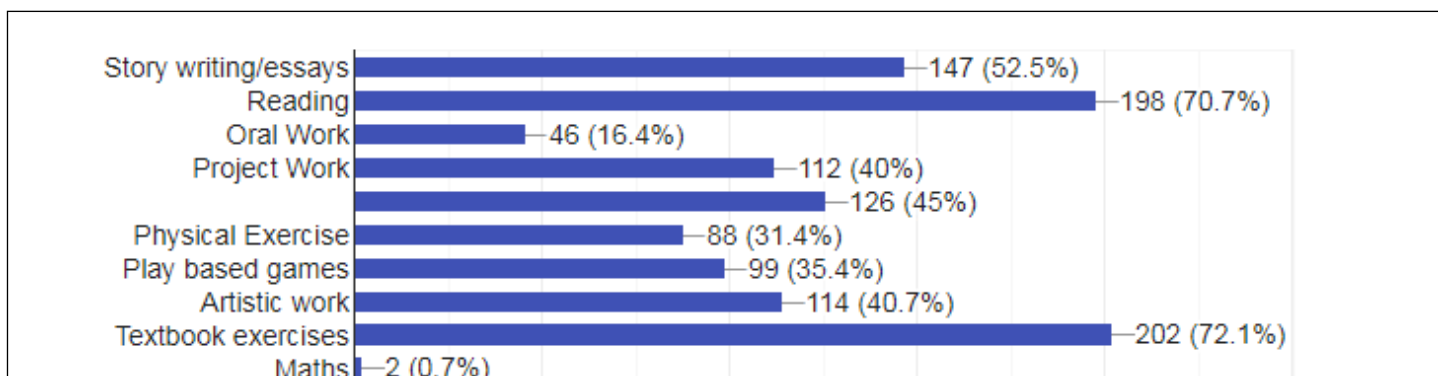- Play based games 35%
- Physical Exercise 31%

Figure 5: Types of work

3.1.5 Question: How often would you like work to be assigned/suggested?

- Daily 47%
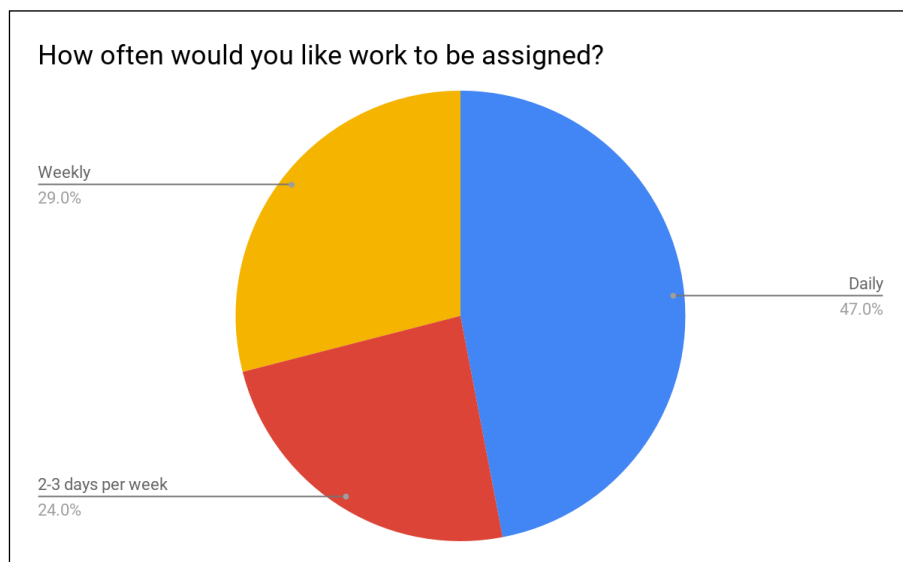- 2-3 days per week 24%
- Weekly 29%

Figure 6: Frequency of work

3.2 Curriculum

3.2.1 Question: Are there any areas of the curriculum which you would like more focus on?

- Maths Problem Solving 53%
- English Reading 42%
- Irish Reading 36%
- English Spelling 36%
- Science 33%
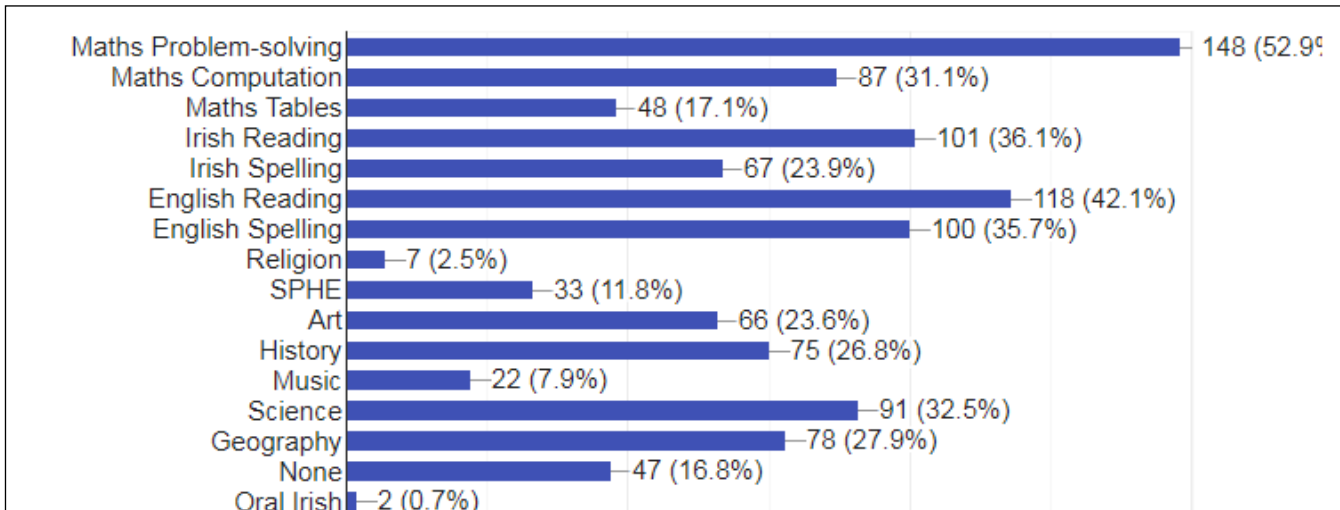- Maths Computation 31%
- Geography 28%
- History 27%

Figure 7: Curricular areas prioritised by parents

3.2.2 Question: In your opinion, how often is appropriate for the teacher to "check-in" and offer encouragement, advice to your child?
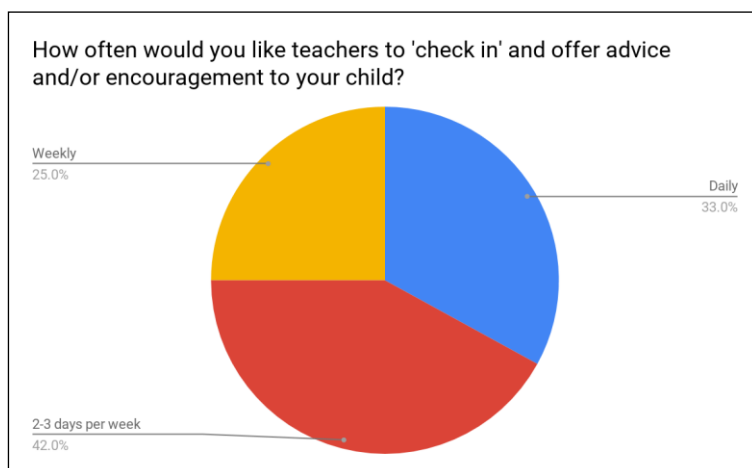
- Daily 33%
- 2-3 days per week 42%
- Weekly 25%

Figure 8: Communication

3.3 Internet-based Work

3.3.1 Question: Are you happy for your child to be assigned work requiring internet access?
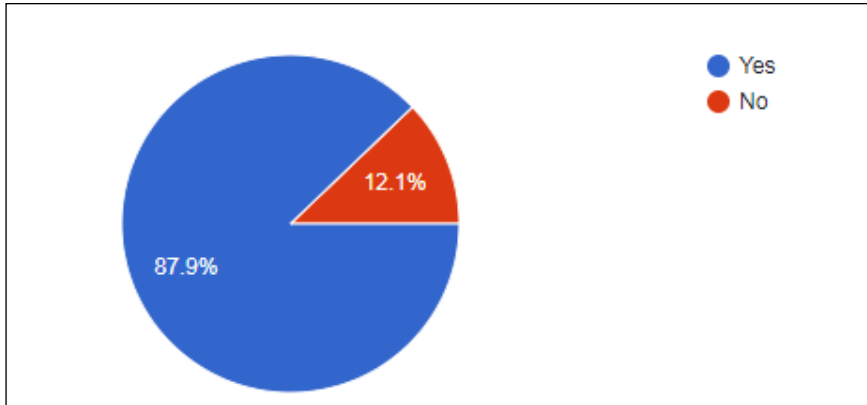
- Yes 88%
- No 12%

Figure 9: Internet Access preferences

3.3.2 Question: Please indicate why you chose 'No'

- Would prefer a focus on non-screen activities 77%
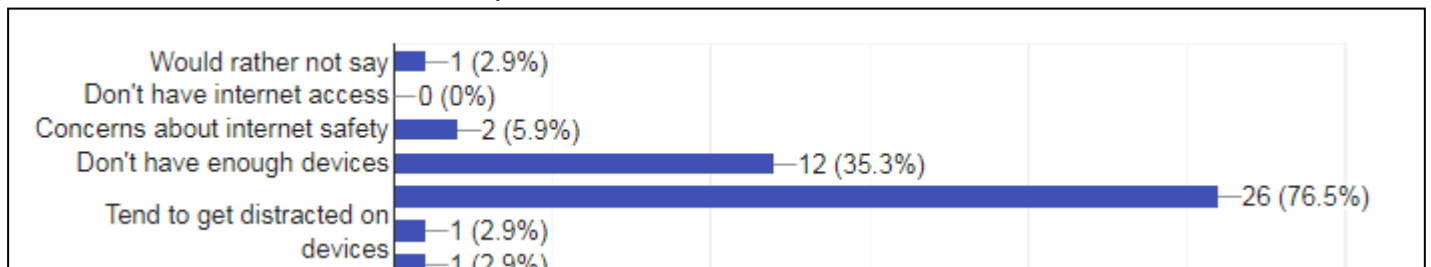- Don't have enough devices 35%
- Concerns about internet safety 6%

Figure 10: Non internet based activities - reasons

3.4 Devices

3.4.1 Question: What device, if any is currently available for use by your child at home?
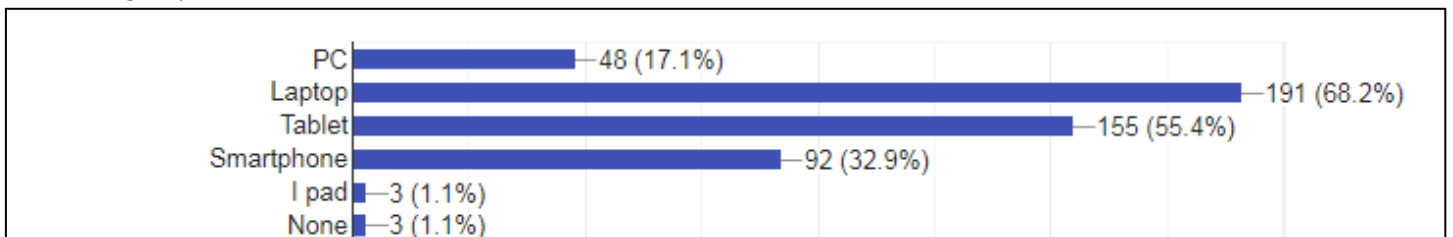
- Laptop 68%
- Tablet 55%
- Smartphone 33%
- PC 17%

Figure 12: Devices (This question had an option to choose more than one device)

3.5 Comments

Parents were invited to provide additional comments at the end of the questionnaire which might further assist in trying to achieve a workable and balanced approach for all in the school community. Participants were asked to be mindful of the school infrastructure, ICT constraints, sustainability of approaches, as well as policies such as Child Safeguarding, Data Protection and Internet Acceptable Use policy. Of the 279 responses to the questionnaire, 180 comments were submitted.
A summary of the main themes from these comments are listed below.

3.5.1 Main themes

a. Communication – 20% of the comments referred to and mentioned the importance of a platform/format for teacher pupil interaction. Many parents stated that two way communication is very important at this time, whether it be on an individual or class basis. There were many different suggestions as to how this could take place, such as: Aladdin – Homework feature; Email facility with parent and teacher; Phone call between parent to teacher; Pre-recorded audio clip – teacher teaching a particular topic; Pre-recorded video clip from the teacher with a greeting or teaching a topic; Video lessons – pre-recorded; Webinars; Video conferencing (Google classroom, Zoom, Edmodo).

b. It was noted that it was important for the children to receive feedback on their work from their teacher. Some parents stated that this would motivate and engage their child more as well as provide a type of assessment.

c. Many parents mentioned their own challenges in working from home and the difficulty in balancing this with their children's learning. Varying circumstances in homes were outlined, such as a shortage of devices; difficulty in accessing online facilities; 2 or 3 children's work to manage; parents working from home; parents working for long hours outside the home; too much work being assigned; too little work being assigned and illness.

d. 20% of the comments suggested that advance notice of a few days/week's work would be very helpful, so that parents would be able to look ahead and plan accordingly.

e. Guidance and advice was requested regarding which work should be prioritised and focused on, a 'menu' type approach. Other parents requested that teachers would be explicit i.e.: that all work must be completed and submitted.

f. Other types of work were suggested by 10% of those that chose to comment. Activities such as outdoor activities, less screen time (in the junior classes), games, physical exercises, project work, artwork, baking, science and Lego.

g. 30% of the comments included a warm note of thanks and appreciation to the staff for all of their work, support and encouragement to date.