**Challenges**

There were a number of challenges that were named that had a recurring theme. These included:

Missing old friends/sadness about moving school: This is a huge part of the initial settling in phase. It is hard for children to come to terms with being in another school – and they absolutely miss their friends. It is so important to keep contact with them and to arrange to meet up as regularly as possible. Sometimes children can feel that they are being punished for having Dyslexia. It is important to talk to your child about what a good opportunity it is to attend Catherine McAuley, and to focus on the positives (improvements they have notices/trips etc.).

Early start/tiredness/travel time: As children come from five different counties, there is a large disparity between travel time for individual students. It is a huge commitment to attend here, and it does mean very real changes for bed time, and this does have an impact at home. The earlier start (especially early for some! Pre-7am) has a huge impact. It is about the cost benefit analysis ultimately – in terms of the potential gain to reading ability, reading fluency, comprehension skills, spelling skills, independent work habits, the development of character strengths like perseverance and grit, growth mindset, and most important of all – confidence and belief in themselves.

Tantrums at homework time: Homework from Catherine McAuley NS is considerably less than mainstream. If, at this point in the year homework is still a problem – please talk to your child’s teacher, and perhaps come up with a joint solution around this – a reward/consequence system can be very effective.

Reading at weekends/holidays: This is a part of placement at Catherine McAuley NS. The reason we give reading homework consistently, is to help with reading fluency as well as the development of a consistent habit of reading. This is part of placement, and we do ask for your support with this. Reading consistently at weekends and in the holidays is always acknowledged and rewarded. Building this skill helps with resilience, as well as handing independence over to the student for leading it. This is the one big area where you can actively support and help maximise placement. Children who practice reading at home will gain more from placement here.

Maths queries: There were a number of queries about maths – specifically around multiplication tables and engaging with maths. As with literacy, our aim at Catherine McAuley NS is to meet your child where they are, and bring them forward with their maths skill. Should anything be a particular problem with homework, like tables/completing a given task/engaging with a topic like fractions etc: please make sure to link in with the teacher, and send in the work that your child can do where maths is concerned (rather than help them with it to the extent where correct work comes in, but the child does not understand how to do it). Link with the teacher by either sending a note in the journal, an email, or a phone call.

Testing: A baseline measure for literacy is taken on the day that children are invited to school in June prior to their commencement in September. This includes diagnostic tests of reading, spelling and comprehension. At the end of each year in May/June we run a similar batch of testing: this is slightly different to mainstream in that we only do standardised testing in Maths (Druncomdra tests). We may read this test to students if they cannot read problems, as this then ensures that the test is of their mathematical ability, and not skewed by their Dyslexia. As all children have a severe presentation of Dyslexia – we do not do either the Drumcondra Reading Test or Micra T Reading tests: instead we repeat the range of diagnostic reading tests (those taken as the baseline measure) that measure single word reading, as well as passage reading, comprehension and spelling. The scores generated by these tests give a picture of progress as placement continues over two years.

Arranging Play Dates: In accordance with GDPR we cannot share parent contact information. Should you wish to make contact with the parent of another student to arrange to meet up/play, please write them a note in a sealed envelope and have your child give it to their friend to bring home. Parents can then make contact. We would also ask that if your child wishes to invite classmates to their birthday party, they invite all students in the class – and not a select group. With small classes of 10 students, it can cause feelings of isolation for some children not to be included.