

Guidelines for Schools

Who are Suas?

Suas is a children's literacy charity that works in Ireland and internationally. We work with partner organisations to deliver quality literacy programmes to children in need of support. We recruit and train volunteers to help us to improve children's literacy.

The Need for Literacy Intervention

In Ireland, 1 in 10 children has serious literacy difficulties, and in designated disadvantaged schools (DEIS) this figure can increase to 1 in 3. Studies have shown that children who do not learn to read, write and communicate effectively at primary level are more likely to leave school early, be unemployed or in low-skilled jobs, have poorer emotional and physical health and are more likely to end up in poverty and in prison.

Literacy Support Programme

Suas Literacy Support Programme works with DEIS schools to provide direct learning-support to schoolchildren aged 8-14 from disadvantaged/marginalised communities to improve their standard of literacy through:

- Selection and delivery of evidence-based literacy support interventions (Paired Reading and AcceleRead AcceleWrite)
- Recruitment and training of voluntary mentors (second level students, third level students including trainee teachers, corporate employees, local community members) to deliver one-to-one interventions
- Implementation of both quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation of the process

Suas Ireland Education Programme currently operates in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. Through the literacy interventions, participants (aged 8-14) increase their reading age and comprehension, improve their self-esteem and enhance their perception of the importance of learning. Additionally, volunteer mentors engage in service to others, gaining a new perspective and enhanced abilities in teamwork and communication.

1. Project Details

Interventions

A. Paired Reading:

Paired Reading takes place twice weekly between mentor and participant (one-to-one). This intervention builds confidence and has been scientifically proven to improve literacy. Research shows that Paired Reading is most effective when delivered in short, frequent, one-on-one sessions.

Sessions and Times

When planning sessions you should allow one hour, twice a week. The hour is split, with each volunteer literacy mentor reading with two children, one after the other in the allocated time. This incorporates time for the volunteer literacy mentor and participant to have an informal chat (5 – 10 minutes) and to read for twenty minutes each.

Session Breakdown:

- 5 minutes to settle down and catch up between mentor and participant 1
- 20 minutes Paired Reading with mentor and participant 1
- 5 minute change over and catch up between mentor and participant 2
- 20 minute Paired Reading with mentor and participant 2

N.B. for Secondary School Participants - Recommended that sessions are not split. One participant reads with one mentor for the full session.

Resources

For Paired Reading the school is responsible for providing books for participants. The books should be age/level appropriate and a good selection should be made available for the duration of the project. It would be very helpful to mentors if teachers can indicate the level of book that is appropriate for the selected children at the outset.

B. AcceleRead AcceleWrite:

Volunteer literacy mentors and participants work one-to-one 4 times a week for 5 weeks (30 minutes per session), using a computer with text to speech software to improve reading, writing, spelling and listening skills of pupils who are experiencing literacy difficulties.

Sessions and Times

For AcceleRead Accelewrite- Sessions should take place from 9-9.30 in the morning.

This covers:

- 5 minutes to settle down and catch up.
- 20minutes working on the computer
- 5 minutes wrap up time

This intervention is not recommended for Secondary schools.

Resources

For AcceleRead AcceleWrite, Suas will install the software on the school's computers. We also provide the materials needed (sentence booklets, headphones and splitters). Schools will supply adequate computers and space to deliver the intervention.

Volunteer Mentors

We recruit, train and manage volunteer literacy mentors from Third Level institutions, Corporate partners, TY students and members of the local community.

All literacy mentors are Garda Vetted and fully trained by Suas team.

2. Participant Selection

Guidelines for participant selection

Suas would recommend schools use the following guidelines when selecting children for the intervention.

Mandatory

- Based on results from last standardised test results, children found to be between 15 to 25 percentile range OR with a standard score of less than 90 OR with a STEN Score of 3.
- Children aged between 8 and 14 years.

Optional

- Children who have fallen behind due to attendance or other factors that would benefit from a literacy intervention.

- Children who are low in confidence, self-esteem and/or could have a stronger affinity for school and learning.

Please see attached participant selection form which needs to be completed and returned to Suas prior to project commencement

Participant Numbers

- Paired Reading (Primary School participants). Recommended number of participants is 12 per project.
- Paired Reading (Secondary School participants). Recommended number of participants is 12 per project.
- AcceleRead AcceleWrite. Recommended number of participants is 10 per project.
Dependent on resources available in the school i.e. computers and space available for participants and mentors.

Suas will provide mentor profiles prior to project commencement. Our research has indicated that matching of mentor and participant can have a significant impact on both literacy gains and other gains including self-esteem. With this in mind, Suas will now share mentor profiles prior to project commencement. We ask that you consider mentor profiles and recommend partners for your students based on these profiles.

3. Space

Our programme works well in a quiet space. Usually schools locate a library or classroom for the sessions. All the mentors and children will be in the same room for the duration of the sessions. This means that there will be six mentors and six children in the room at any one time.

4. Supervision

In accordance with Suas Health, Safety and Welfare policy and Suas Child Protection policy, all Literacy Support sessions must be supervised by a member of the school staff. Responsibility for provision of supervision lies with the school. The school is responsible for providing a supervisor who will be present for the duration of each session. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring sessions start and end on time and the changeover mid-session

happens on time; maintaining a healthy learning environment; dealing with any behavioural issues; recording of any incidents/disclosures and maintaining communication as appropriate with Suas.

5. Evaluation

Suas Ireland Education Programme includes a monitoring and evaluation framework that involves pre and post testing of children's reading ability, feedback from children, mentors and school staff via customised questionnaires and ad hoc feedback. This approach enables us to identify best practice as well as demonstrating impact to project stakeholders.

Pre and Post Testing is completed by Suas at a pre-arranged time slot and is an essential component of the programme. We ask that schools facilitate and support this testing process by making students available pre and post programme and ensuring that a quiet space is available with no interruptions.