



# Summary of Findings of the Pilot Stage of

## *Welcome to Well-Being – Meet Mo and Ko!*

February 2021

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### Programme details:

**Title:** *Welcome to Well-Being - Meet Mo and Ko!*

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[www.otb.ie/welcome-to-well-being-meet-mo-ko](http://www.otb.ie/welcome-to-well-being-meet-mo-ko)

### Introduction:

The ***Welcome to Well-Being*** programme is a 3-level SPHE programme for children from Junior Infants to 1st Class. It is based on the field of Positive Psychology, the science of well-being. Positive Psychology is underpinned by concepts such as Character Strengths, Positive Emotions, Positive Relationships and resilience (*Seligman, 2011*). The programme was created by Fiona Forman, (*M.Sc. Applied Positive Psychology*), a former primary school teacher who is also the co-author of the ***Weaving Well-Being*** programme (*Forman & Rock, 2016*) for 2nd to 6th class children. ***Welcome to Well-Being*** is designed to link to the ***Weaving Well-Being*** programme and introduces children to many concepts, skills and strategies which are then further developed in the latter programme. The aim is to provide a comprehensive, incremental and integrated programme to promote children's well-being, resilience and emotional regulation across all levels of primary education from Junior Infants to 6th Class. Enhancing children's well-being can lead to a wide variety of other successful outcomes including increased academic performance, better relationships and increased resilience. (*Waters, 2011; Park & Peterson, 2008*).

### Programme Overview:

#### Theme:

The theme of the programme is that two little aliens called Mo and Ko have come from planet Zo to help children to feel happy, strong, kind and brave, loving and well. Each week they introduce children to a new idea and they set a challenge for the children to try it out for the week – at home as well as at school.

#### Structure:

Each level of the programme has 10 lessons, each with the following components:

- **Lesson Plan** – containing background information, relevant SPHE modules, poem, lesson outcomes, development & conclusion, multi-media clip, supplementary resources and posters
- **PowerPoint Slides** – containing all relevant material for the presentation of the lesson, including a multi-media element
- **Pupil Book** – containing 2 Pupil Activities per lesson and homework activity
- **Homework** – Pupils are encouraged to listen to the poem at home with their parents and to do the challenge every day
- **Parent/Guardian/Carer Guide** – (in the centre of each Pupil Book) to encourage parents to support their child in using the skills
- **Supplementary ideas/resources** – Each lesson has a supplementary photocopiable sheet at the back of the book along with other suggestions to help to embed the topic and integrate it with other subjects

For further information on the ***Welcome to Well-Being*** programme go to: [www.otb.ie/W2W](http://www.otb.ie/W2W)



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#### **Methodologies and Activities:**

The **Welcome to Well-Being** programme uses the approaches and methodologies outlined in the SPHE curriculum guidelines (DES, 1999). These are based on the concept of active learning; as the children engage with the lesson, they are encouraged to actively apply the skill or idea in their own lives, through the weekly challenge. Other activities include talk and discussion, responding through art, visual organisers, reflecting, poetry and mindfulness activities. Each lesson also contains a multi-media component, usually a song or video story.

#### **Aims of the Pilot Stage:**

The first level of the programme – **Welcome to Well-Being - Meet Mo and Ko!** – was piloted in 14 schools from September to December 2020. Teachers and parents were surveyed using Google Forms after the programme was completed and teachers were also encouraged to submit comments and feedback throughout the period of teaching the programme. Teachers were also asked to submit sample comments from the children to gain their views on the programme.

The aims of the pilot stage were as follows:

- To establish how easy the programme was to teach
- To establish how age-appropriate the activities were
- To gauge general levels of pupil engagement in the lessons
- To obtain general feedback from teachers, parents and children on the programme
- To obtain suggestions for improvement in any aspects of the programme, in order to incorporate some of these ideas into the final edition of the programme

#### **Aims of the Pilot Stage:**

The following 14 schools took part in the pilot stage. 18 teachers gave feedback and approximately 700 pupils were involved.

**Citywest and Saggart Community NS**, Co. Dublin

**Coldwood NS**, Co. Galway

**Coralstown NS**, Co. Westmeath

**Malahide-Portmarnock Educate Together**, Co. Dublin

**Our Lady of Good Counsel NS**, Glenageary, Co. Dublin

**Our Lady of Victories Infant School**, Ballymun, Co. Dublin

**Scoil an Droichid**, Belfast, Co. Antrim

**Skerries Educate Together**, Co. Dublin

**St. Columba's NS**, Dublin 3

**St. Fiachra's Junior School**, Dublin 5

**St. Patrick's NS**, Castletara, Co. Cavan

**St. Paul's NS**, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

**St. Peter & Paul's JNS**, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin

**Woodland NS**, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal



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#### **Sample Teacher Comments (Sept–Dec 2020):**

Below is a representative sample of feedback received from teachers as they progressed through the programme, from September to December. These comments sum up the overall positive response received from schools.

*I taught the first lesson today and the children loved it! From a teacher's point of view, the handbook was so informative and comprehensive and the PowerPoint was great.*

*We completed the first lesson last week on the pilot programme. It was fantastic. The children really enjoyed it. I heard a few comments like 'that was nice' and 'it's so relaxing' after the body scan. They really enjoyed sharing the three good things with each other and Mo and Ko were very popular. We discussed the three good things about our week in school on Friday too. I also sent the book home and it got a very positive response from parents. Well done on an excellent programme.*

*We started the programme and it was very well received by the children so far. It is aimed at exactly the right level. The pictures and the PowerPoints are very colourful and inviting for young children. They engaged really well with the lessons.*

*I am delighted with it all so far. It is pitched at just the right level and the language is perfect for children of Junior Infants. Last week we did the section on the Big Feelings and I was amazed at how the children opened up to talk about their own Big Feelings.*

*Mo and Ko have made a big impression, we are all very much enjoying the lessons. The biggest thing I think is the clarity of the message, children are getting a lot from it!*

*We are also using it in the most junior special ASD class. They felt they finally got something that is meaningful for the children. The children in this class would be 6-8yrs and they feel it is perfectly pitched for them and they can understand it.*

*The children are loving the Welcome to Well-Being program so far. It is really well put together and the children totally buy into the characters Mo and Ko. We do W2W every Monday and the children get really excited when they see the PowerPoint pop up on the board.*

#### **Final Feedback:**

18 teachers completed the final feedback form.

9 of them had Junior Infants, 3 had Senior Infants, 4 had First Class and 2 had SEN/ASD classes.

The feedback was as follows:

- All teachers rated the programme as easy to teach, with the majority of them rating it as 'extremely easy'
- All teachers reported that the children were very engaged in the lessons, with the majority rating levels of engagement as 'extremely high'
- 95% of teachers rated the activities as age-appropriate, with the majority rating them as 'highly age-appropriate'. One teacher of an ASD class of children of senior infant level reported that some of the activities were above the ability level of the children, while the teacher of another ASD class of 6-8 year-olds rated the activities as highly age-appropriate



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#### **Sample Teacher Comments (Jan 2021):**

Below is a representative sample of feedback received from teachers after they completed the programme. Feedback was extremely positive, as the comments below indicate.

*Fantastic programme - could it be extended to the next stage and the children could experience the characters again at the next age level - they are enjoying it so much!*

*It was fabulous, the age-appropriateness of having 'Mo and Ko' was invaluable. Having taught Weaving Well-Being in 6th class previously it was great to see a continuity of what they are learning being transferred across the class levels.*

*I know the Parents in Coralstown N.S. were hugely grateful that their children had the opportunity to do this programme. Parents were very involved and happy to reinforce the learning with the workbook at home. One comment that came back on the workbook "I think this is a great idea"*

*I have loved implementing this programme in my class. It has been very beneficial and feels as though we are providing the children with key life skills from such an early age. It is fantastic to see the children in tune with their feelings and emotions and using the skills to navigate through difficulties. I have seen the children using these skills when resolving conflict with friends or out on the yard when feeling upset. I feel as though it reassures children that it is okay and normal to have 'Big Feelings' and this programme provides strategies to deal with having those feelings. I have loved taking part in this course and is something I would be interested in implementing in my future classes too.*

*The illustrations and graphics are wonderful!*

*Found it was useful to form relationships with the children. As part of our circles, we had conversations in which children recognised their feelings and opened up more often than not. Through the characters and my experiences, the children became aware that it was okay to have all these feelings.*

*It is a very good programme. Very accessible for teachers and easy to use. Mo and Ko are a great hook for the children and their stories keep them engaged.*

#### **Suggestions for Improvements:**

The most common suggestions for improving the programme were as follows:

- To have puppets/soft toys of the characters
- To have an animation of the characters
- To include videos of children talking about the topics
- To have more variety in the homework activities

The homework activities were changed as a result of this feedback, and the other elements are also planned for the future.

Some teachers suggested having less content in the Pupil Book; however, the majority of teachers did not suggest this.

One of the teachers, from a large DEIS Band 1 school (which has 40% of students with EAL) suggested Term 2 as a suitable time for teaching the programme, to allow for a term of language acquisition by these children. This is a very helpful suggestion which might be useful for other similar schools to bear in mind.



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#### **Feedback from Parents/Guardians/Carers:**

All parents/guardians/carers who responded to the survey rated the programme as helpful to their children, with the majority rating it as extremely helpful.

Here are some sample comments:

*This is an amazing programme and the most important subject in school if you ask me. Please, please, please keep it going. My son has started talking about feelings so much more at home even though we have always tried to do the same at home.*

*It was great that it touched on aspects of life I wouldn't have normally brought up with my 6 year old like sadness which I found difficult to explain to him, but which is an important lesson too. I suppose there is always a focus on being happy & positive especially with children but it's good to explain that there is sadness too & it's OK to be sad.*

*I think it very beneficial. It has helped a child who finds it difficult to discuss her emotions.*

*Excellent programme. Very valuable for young children to learn how to deal with their 'big feelings'*

*It's a great programme as it addresses all the areas of life and explains it in simple terms.*

*My daughter enjoyed the Mo and Ko programme very much. She loves to draw pictures of all different emotions she has and the ways to deal with the negative ones.*

#### **Children's Feedback:**

The children's feedback (submitted by teachers) was also very positive, as indicated by the samples below:

*This is fun! I love the characters!*

*Mo & Ko have different feelings just like us - I like talking & singing about them.*

*I like feeling proud of myself & think I'm strong like a mountain.*

*I do my slide breathing like Mo & Ko when I feel a bit cross.*

*My whole family told our good things from the day at dinner last night.*

*I really like Ko and Mo because they are very friendly.*

*I used my slide breathing to help feel calm when I was upset on yard.*

*I told my mammy how I felt when my sister broke my Lego and it made me feel better.*

*Mo and Ko are fun. I liked slide breathing.*

*Use your slide breathing if you don't feel OK!!!*

*I like doing slide breathing, I know all my feelings and my big feelings like with Mo and Ko.*

*I like the poems. I like the slide breathing.*

*I really like the song videos!*

*I like drawing in my workbook.*



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#### **Conclusion:**

The feedback from the pilot stage of ***Welcome to Well-Being - Meet Mo and Ko!*** was very positive from teachers, pupils and parents/guardians/carers. Feedback and suggestions were taken on board and the final version was published by Outside the Box Learning Resources on Feb 4th 2021.

*The next 2 levels of the programme **Welcome to Well-Being - Good to be me with Mo and Ko!** and **Welcome to Well-Being - Feeling Good with Mo and Ko!** were subsequently piloted and then published later in 2021.*

It is hoped that independent research can be carried out in the near future on the programme to further evaluate its impact on the well-being of children.

The author would like to sincerely thank all of the principals, teachers, children and parents who took part in the pilot stage and gave such helpful feedback.

#### **Thank You:**

The author and publisher would like to sincerely thank the principals, teachers, pupils and parents/guardians/carers of the following schools for their support, co-operation, feedback, suggestions and encouragement in piloting this programme:

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St. Patrick's NS, Castletara, Co. Cavan  
Coralstown NS, Co. Westmeath  
Citywest and Saggart Community NS, Co. Dublin  
Coldwood NS, Co. Galway  
St. Paul's NS, Athlone, Co. Westmeath  
Woodland NS, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal  
Our Lady of Victories Infant School, Ballymun, Co. Dublin  
Scoil an Droichid, Belfast, Co. Antrim  
Skerries Educate Together, Co. Dublin  
Our Lady of Good Counsel NS, Glenageary, Co. Dublin  
Malahide-Portmarnock Educate Together, Co. Dublin  
St. Fiachra's Junior School, Dublin 5  
St. Columba's NS, Dublin 3

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