

Does Doodle Den work?

Doodle Den was rigorously evaluated by a team from Queen's University, Belfast, using a randomised controlled trial in which children who received Doodle Den were compared with similar children who did not. The evaluation team used standardised tools like the Drumcondra Test to measure the children's literacy ability as well as teacher's rating scales and interviews with various stakeholders, including parents.

The team found that participation in the Doodle Den programme led to:

- Improvements in the children's overall literacy with particular gains seen in sentence structure, word choice and word recognition;
- Improvements in concentration;
- Reduction in problem behaviours in school;
- Increase in the child's reading at home;
- Increased family library use;
- Increased teacher expectations.

Doodle Den has been included in the UK's Early Intervention Foundation list of evidenced interventions, and is only the second Irish programme to be included.

What responsibility will I have?

Each participating school will need to:-

- Identify a venue/room in which the programme will be delivered;
- Identify who will deliver the programme to both parents and children and ensure that they participate in all training and quality assurance processes;
- Support the evaluation process as informed by CDI;
- Provide drinks and snacks for all participants.

CDI is part funded by:

TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

What supports does CDI provide?

- Training for facilitators which includes induction training and booster training sessions;
- Site visits and on site support for facilitators and service managers from a Quality Specialist and literacy expert;
- On-going phone and email support for facilitators;
- The Doodle Den manual which provides a detailed curriculum, including the content for each session of the programme. It highlights the resources required and includes notes and resources for all sessions;
- Regular reflective practice meetings to support quality, training and team work. These are delivered through Communities of Practice;
- Meetings with service managers to monitor quality and support programme delivery;
- Support in capacity building, staff selection and engaging key stakeholders;
- A dedicated on-line portal for Doodle Den Facilitators, to enable sharing of information resources and ideas;
- The doodleden.ie website which includes loads of activities and games to support children's learning.



If you would like to receive more information
about Doodle Den please visit www.cdi.ie
or contact info@cdi.ie



Doodle Den

Frequently Asked Questions



What is Doodle Den?

Doodle Den is an after school literacy programme for children in Senior Infant classes. Doodle Den runs for the academic year; sessions are delivered three times per week for 90 minutes each. It utilises an evidence-based curriculum that features a balanced literacy framework. It offers a manualised curriculum that is activity-based and incorporates literacy learning opportunities through games, art, drama and PE activities as well as more traditional approaches to teaching literacy.

Who delivers Doodle Den?

Each group of up to 15 children is facilitated by two people. One of these is a primary teacher and the other has a third level qualification in social care, youth work or childcare. The facilitators participate in training and ongoing support with CDI to enable the effective delivery of the Doodle Den Programme.

Who is Doodle Den for?

Doodle Den is for children aged between 5 and 6 years in Senior Infants. Each group offers 15 spaces to children who would benefit from additional literacy support or group work. The children's class teachers or support workers make referrals to the programme using a standard referral form. Parents can also make referrals to the programme, by talking to the Class Teacher and filling out a form. The Junior Infants Class Teacher is best placed to identify children who will benefit from Doodle Den in the following academic year. The parent consent forms and referral information are all provided in the manual, and there will need to be local agreement on who takes referrals and makes the final decision on participants. Each school/service should agree this as early as possible.



How long does the programme run for?

Doodle Den runs for the academic year. Sessions are delivered after school three times per week for 90 minutes each.

What does it take to deliver Doodle Den?

- Each group of up to 15 children will need two facilitators, both of whom have received the relevant training;
- A dedicated Doodle Den space that is located on or near the school campus. The environment must be as different from a school classroom as possible with bean bags, cushions and clear floor and wall space available for use;
- Doodle Den should take place immediately after-school to promote good attendance at each session;
- Programme materials such as books, art equipment, a laptop or PC etc are required;
- Good links with the relevant schools to ensure their support in the management of the groups, preparation of referrals and promotion of the programme;
- Drinks and snacks for the children at the start of each session.

What does it cost to deliver Doodle Den?

Doodle Den costs up to €5,000 per annum, excluding staff salaries, to cover programme materials and to support related activities eg snacks, family day costs and some operating costs. Using existing staff as facilitators (eg HSCL, SCP) keeps the cost of delivering Doodle Den to a minimum.

How do children get chosen?

The Junior Infants Class Teacher is best placed to identify children who will benefit from Doodle Den. The parent consent forms and referral information are all provided in the manual, and there will need to be local agreement on who takes referrals and makes the final decision on participants.

How many children can we work with?

It is recommended that a maximum of 15 children participate in each Doodle Den group.

Who else is involved with Doodle Den?

- **Parents:** parental involvement is a strong feature of the Doodle Den Programme. Facilitators deliver six parent sessions throughout the year. These sessions are informal and offer the parents the opportunity to learn about the work their children are doing, explore ways to support the learning done in Doodle Den and learn about other services in their local community, such as the library. The facilitators also deliver three family sessions in which the children and parents work together in a variety of Doodle Den activities;
- **Schools:** engaging with schools is another crucial part of the Doodle Den Programme. Regular meetings are held with the school principals and relevant school representatives to ensure that Doodle Den is working to meet the needs of the children involved;
- **Library:** the library is an important support for the Doodle Den Programme. Sessions including the local children's librarian and visits to the library are important in helping families to establish links with their local service. The library can be a key resource in helping to meet families' literacy needs and use of the library is encouraged throughout the Doodle Den Programme.

