

# Connecting awareness of child safety, learning and well-being to concrete actions: Evaluation of integrated trauma-informed practices in an Irish Primary school

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## This Project evaluated new initiatives implemented within an Irish primary school that support trauma-informed practice in education.

The Project explored the experience and impact of these initiatives on key stakeholders - students, teachers, parents and community partners - within the school community. These initiatives aimed to build resilience and mitigate the impact of adverse experiences in the school community.

*'Trauma-informed practices are defined as the day-to-day initiatives, interventions and practices that are carried out within the core processes of working with children and families within the specific professionals' role that reflect principles of person-centered care and trauma recovery' (Lotty, 2023a; 2023b).*

## The Study Context

Interest in trauma-informed practice in education has grown significantly over the last number of years in schools in Ireland.

To date no evaluation data on the implementation of these practices in a school in Ireland was found.

The study research site was an Irish primary school for children aged 4-12 years in an area of significant socio-economically disadvantaged area with high rates of deprivation and criminality in an urban setting in Ireland.

Significant efforts to move towards preventative, relational responses that promote safety (safeguarding), engagement, learning and wellbeing through embedding *trauma-informed practices* via key initiatives have been made. The study carried out an evaluation of the impact of these initiatives.

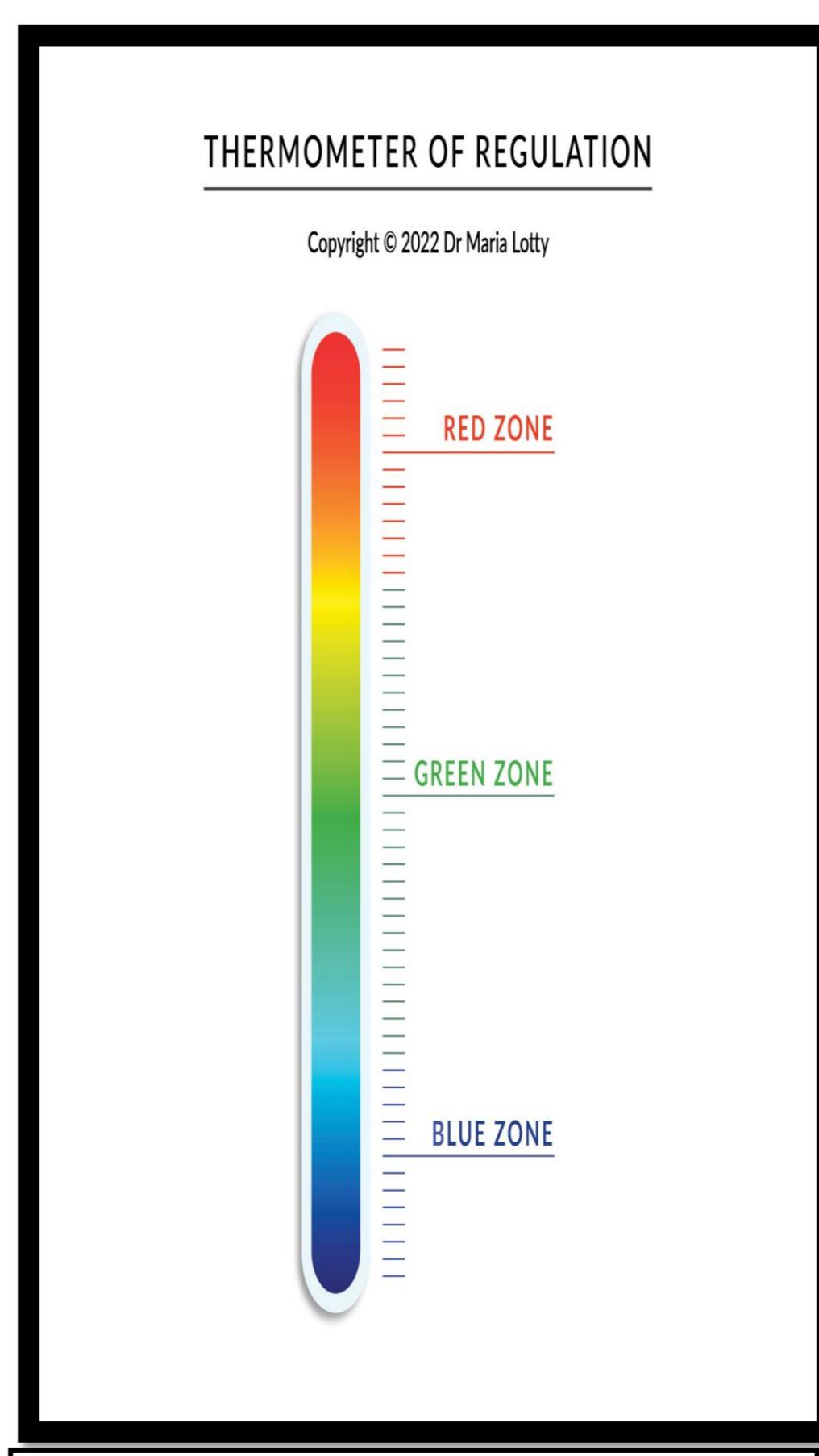


## Methodology

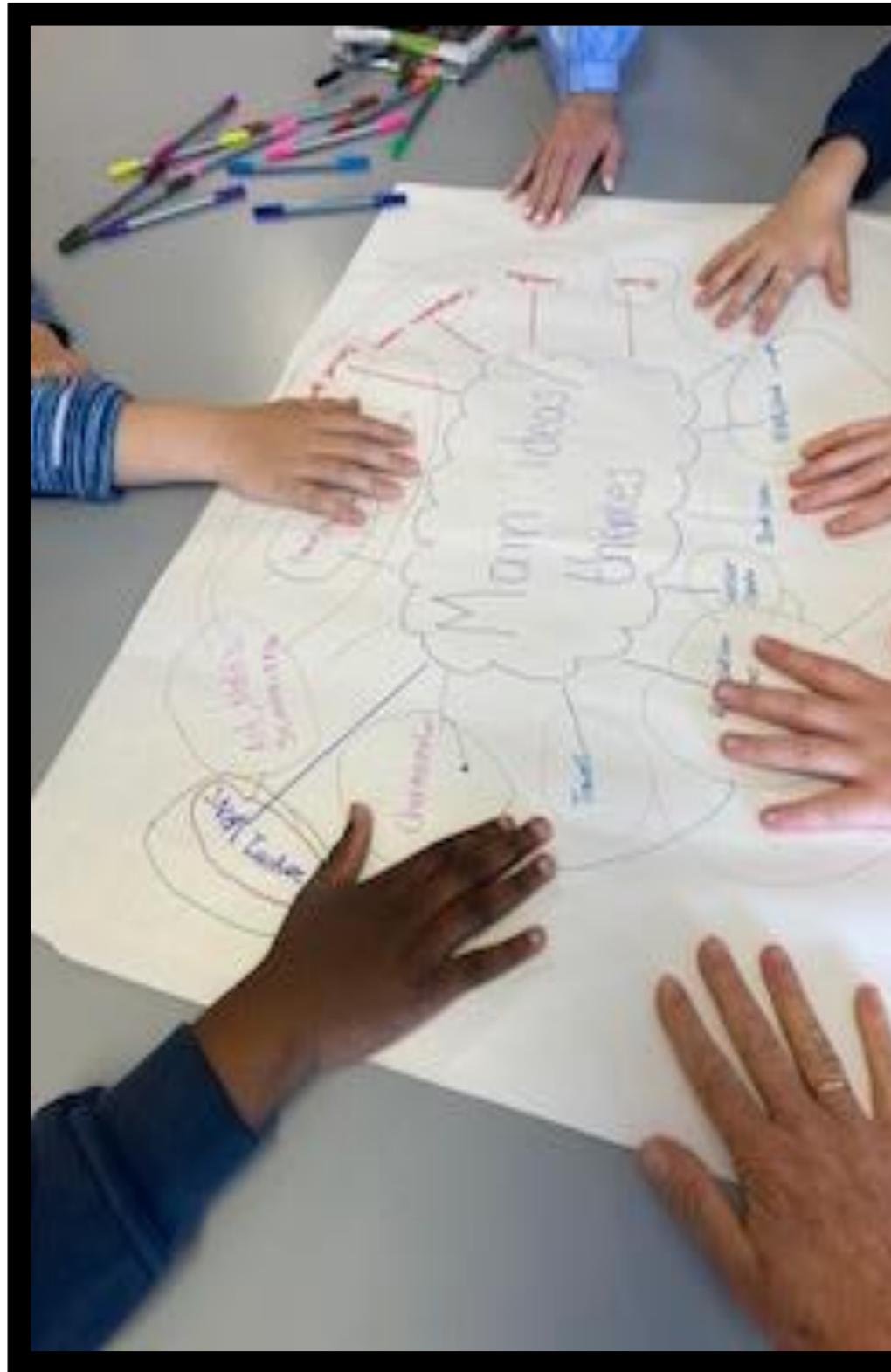
A mixed methods approach was employed across three separate study components using a sequential design:

1. Firstly, an electronic survey using validated measures evaluated school staff ( $n = 29$ ) perceptions of the initiatives (June 2025).
2. Secondly, qualitative data was gathered using a photo voice method from students ( $n = 11$ ) on their perceptions of the initiatives (June 2025).
3. Lastly, qualitative data was gathered through a focus groups to capture perceptions of a range of community partners (parents and other community partners e.g. youth justice, health, education and social work services;  $n = 6$ ) (July 2025).

The findings of the three component studies were integrated to produce results for the overall study.



Lotty, M. (2024, June 13). The Thermometer of Regulation, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11394136>



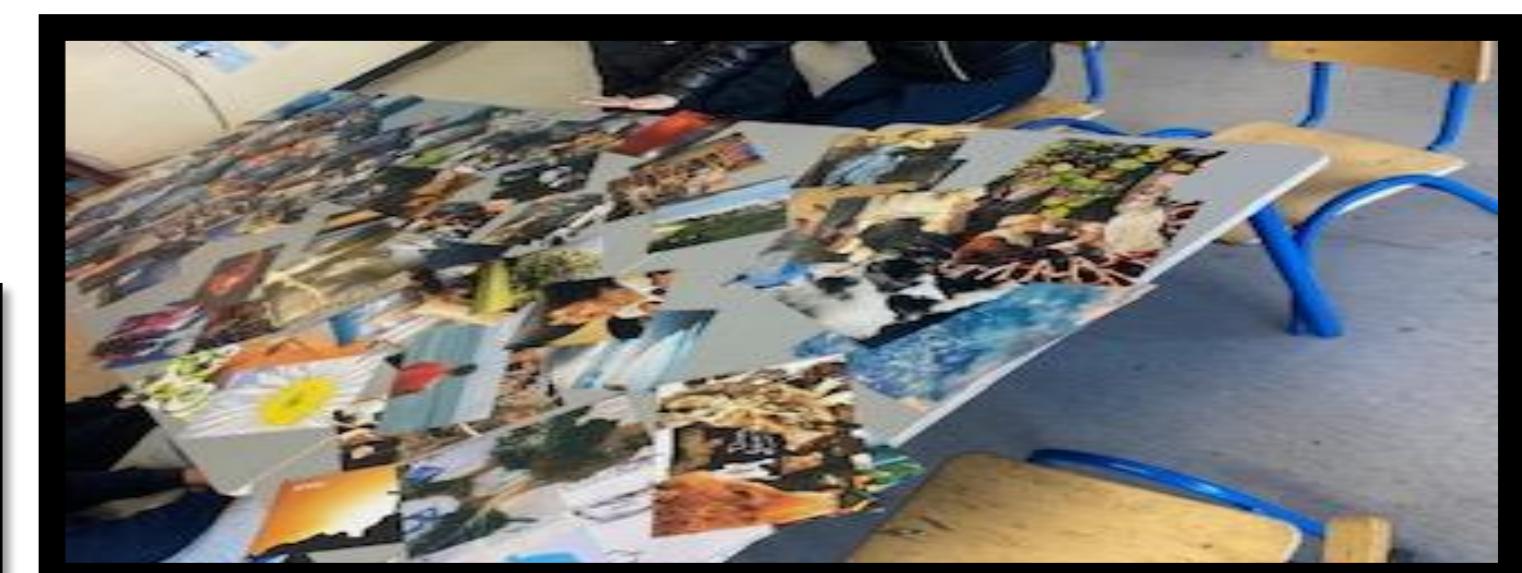
## Major Findings

**Theme 1: Impact of trauma-informed practice:** improved pupil emotional regulation skills; pupil well-being and pupil engagement.

**Theme 2: School as a safe haven:** high satisfaction with new relationship based - behavioural policy, improved pupil-staff relationships and staff well-being.

**Theme 3: Complex needs of the school community;** importance of meeting pupils basic needs before learning (hunger, rest/sleep, hygiene) in the school, ongoing impact of TIP into family life and challenges in how to address extreme pupil behaviour in school beyond TIP.

**Theme 4 : Implementing trauma-informed practice:** high acceptability of TIP implementation with staff, however, further implementation needs to address ongoing staff training and policy development were identified.



## Key Implications

1. Photovoice methods supported the children's participation in research.
2. Three prolonged approach allowed findings of the impacts of trauma-informed practices from a socio-ecological perspectives across spheres of the child, parent, teacher, and community partners.
3. The study contributes to learnings on how to improve implementation of school-based initiatives that support safety (safeguarding), engagement, learning and wellbeing.

## References

Lotty, M. (2023a). Supporting Child Welfare Practice through an integrated practice model: Trauma, Attachment and Resilience into Action-TARA. *The Irish Social Worker*, 11-22. <https://hdl.handle.net/10468/15339>  
Lotty, M (2023b). TARA Practice Model (Trauma, Attachment, Resilience into Action). Zenodo. <https://zenodo.org/doi/10.5281/zenodo.11387651>