Background
There was quite a discrepancy between the teacher and student responses in the MML survey last year around the area of student voice. Teachers believed that students had a great opportunity to voice their opinions in class and on school matters, whereas, students felt quite the opposite. It was, therefore, decided after the lockdown in 2020 that now more than ever it was important that students felt they had a voice in their learning. The student council at the beginning of the school year was our main source of contact in respect of this.They were the initial focus group that helped us identify the areas where students felt were working well and those where improvement was needed. A google classroom was created for the senior cycle members of student council to use as a contact platform between them and Ms. Galvin. Students were shown how to create google forms and how to tabulate the results obtained from the surveys. Ms. Galvin, along with Ms. Brosnan, met this focus group once a week to discuss student issues and general school planning. The overall objective was to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning by encouraging engagement through participating meaningfully. We wanted to create a sense of partnership between the students and teachers and communicate the results of surveys back to students and teachers so as to provide feedback and guidance in improving the overall school experience. The surveys, presentations to students and staff along with regular contact with the focus groups allowed for reflection.

Surveys and Results
The first survey was sent out to second to sixth year students the first week back to school. The survey included the following questions and statements.

- I engaged well with the blended learning approach over Covid-19.
- My biggest challenge(s) learning from home
- What did you enjoy about online learning that you would like to see continued?
- What are your main concerns returning to school after Covid-19?
- What are you most looking forward to being back in a classroom setting?

The results of these surveys were communicated to students and staff to try and make the necessary improvements so the teaching and learning could be more beneficial. From the results obtained, the students felt overall they engaged well with the online learning with over 70% of fourth, third and second year students feeling they engaged very well. However, fifth and sixth year students believed their engagement was less, with 55% of fifth year students feeling they engaged well and 65% of sixth year students indicating they engaged well. The biggest challenges identified by students across all year groups was the lack of structure, motivation, distractions in the home, reliability of the internet, lack of IT skills and overall mental health. Students found the recorded classes very useful and the material being available to them on google classroom. They felt there were less time constraints for completing homework and assignments which was beneficial for their mental health. Students were concerned with how much they felt they didn't learn properly during the online period, they were anxious about tests and falling behind. Students looked forward to the structure and routine of school along with seeing their friends and teachers.

Another survey was sent out to exam year students to get their thoughts on the October assessments and whether they felt there was value in doing them. This survey included the following questions.

- Did you think there was value to the midterm assessments?
- What has the midterm assessments informed you about your learning?
- How could the midterm assessments be improved?
- What is helping you to learn at present?

Greater than 90% of both exam years felt there was value to the midterm assessments, and just over 70% of the TY students felt there was value in the midterm assessments. The students felt that the midterm assessments reminded them of the importance of regular revision, the importance of practicing exam papers and timing as well as identifying the learning techniques that worked best for them. The students suggested that for future term assessments that they could be spaced out better; possibly two exams a day, operating it as a full exam week as they found it difficult to focus in class if there was an assessment in the evening. Students also felt the need to provide more notice on the chapters that were being assessed. Students felt that regular class tests, exam papers, youtube clips and mind maps really supported their learning.

Student council sent regular google forms to students in all year groups to provide opportunities for students to voice their concerns and suggestions. These were discussed with the student council members and addressed collectively. During the second lockdown, there was a significant amount of contact and support available to students. Students received the following questions on a google form to provide feedback to staff on what was working well and what needed improvement. The results were powerful in determining the focus for assemblies etc.

- What is working well with online learning?
- What can be improved?
- What virtual event would you like to engage in before the Easter break?
- How often are you in contact with your peers for social purposes outside of the classroom?
- How engaged do you feel now with online learning?

The main points that arose from this survey was the lack of social engagement first year students were having with one another. This was a serious concern and measures have been put in place to address this issue for example; SPHE, RE and PE classes have been encouraged to take students out for a walk to converse and socialise with one another as we feel these skills were considerably impacted by the lockdown.

Finally, towards the end of the school year a survey was distributed to all members of the student council to identify what they felt worked well this year and how we could improve for next year.

- Did you feel that student voice was heard this year?
- What improvements have been made around the area of student voice?
- What did you feel your role was as a student council member in promoting student voice?

One hundred percent of the student council members felt that the student voice was heard this year. They felt that there had been a variety of events and activities that took place for the student body throughout the year. The students were encouraged to provide their input and suggestions through the use of google forms. The student council are very grateful for the opportunity to have been involved in the process and noted that classmates were comfortable to share their opinions with them. They believe sending out google forms, having regular weekly meetings and planning events really boosted the morale in the school. They felt the student council and SHSS instagram page was very active and informative during the year. Student council members noted that their role was challenging this year with Covid but felt they were active and engaged contributing to boosting student and staff morale and bridging the gap between students and teachers on school matters.

Within the classroom and CPD opportunities explored
Teachers were encouraged at staff meetings when reflecting on the results of students' surveys to ensure there was continued dialogue and discussion in their classroom, where students were provided choice and given an opportunity to reflect on the process of learning specific to different subjects. This was facilitated during the study skills days. Teachers were informed of CPD opportunities through JCT and from the school staff themselves of ways to create a collaborative learning environment that encourages engagement, leadership, feedback and self evaluation. Some of the CPD attended were "Experiencing Student Voice in Our Classroom: Theory and Practice", "Collaboration in the physically distanced classroom -considerations for school leaders" and "Strategies to promote active student engagement".

Promotion of Student Leadership
Ms. Galvin completed the LIFT programme on leadership in August 2020. The leadership programme was rolled out to all TY students and second year students. Some of the TY students then had an opportunity to lead the programme and teach second year students, however, not all due to Covid. The programme certainly created greater awareness of leadership and how they can demonstrate these skills throughout their school life. Opportunities for leadership were also evident in the student council when organising school events. TY student council members demonstrated great leadership skills and qualities when organising the friendship week. They were encouraged and guided by Ms. Galvin and realised the time and effort that is required to organise such an event. Students learned how to create google forms in order to gather information from fellow students, presented to management what they hoped to achieve and the logistics involved, analysed teacher and student timetables along with classroom availability in order to organise the event efficiently. Students as a result improved on their presentation skills, organisation skills, communication skills and IT skills. These students are in the TY focus group for the curriculum review of TY 2020/2021 and so will hopefully be able to empower the other students with the knowledge and skills they have obtained through the experience of organising the friendship week. The students involved have since organised fundraising for the Irish Heart Foundation, Focus Ireland through the "Rebel Sleep

Out" and upcoming events involving promotion of Darkness into Light and an LGBTQ+ awareness week.

Going forward
- Another teacher to complete the LIFT programme training in 2021.
- 2020/2021 TY focus group - liaising with management on the 2021/2022 TY curriculum.
- New Mentor programme will be rolled out with fifth year students (possibly Meitheal).
- Continued communication and collaboration between students and teachers through the use of google forms.
- Other CPD opportunities to encourage student voice, leadership and engagement.