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Maintain the schooling of school refusers: conceptualisation of a school reception protocol using digital technology

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Abstract. School Refusal (SR) can affect one pupil per class and last for several months or years. These pupils, who are more or less absent from school, represent a major challenge for schoolteachers, who find it difficult to understand these disorders and put in place solutions to keep them in school. For their part, SR pupils talk about the need to be able to build a future for themselves at school. An in-school reception protocol with face-to-face and distance learning sessions is drawn up on the basis of the needs of the pupils and the difficulties of dealing with them in the school environment. A contact person ensures good communication between all those involved. Digital technology is proposed as a mediator between the teachers, who send the educational content provided in class, and the anxious pupils who refuse to attend school. In this way, a new ecological intervention and monitoring system based on a program of actions has been devised to meet the needs of SR pupils.

Keywords: School refusal - eLearning- Blended learning – advisor – school dropout – education - anxiety- school attendance

1 Introduction

Pupils with school refusal (SR) are "children who, for irrational reasons, refuse to go to school and resist with very strong anxiety or panic reactions when they are forced to do so" [1]. Pupils suffering from SR affirm they want to go to school but cannot. They seek the comfort and security of home. These children have emotional problems that take the form of physical symptoms, but they do not display antisocial behaviour. In addition, the parents make the necessary efforts in relation to the school to maintain or re-establish schooling. [2] [3]. As schooling is a major social and economic issue, the question of maintaining schooling and the future of the child in SR is important, especially as compulsory schooling is itself the genesis of SR. In fact, the SR is a phenomenon that has been observed since the introduction of compulsory schooling.

School refusal is associated, in the various world psychiatric classifications, with anxiety or depressive disorders [4]. The figure of 1 to 5% of cases in school-age children has been put forward in various scientific publications [5]. The causes are manifold and may stem from the child's personal or family history, or from bullying at school [6] [7].

Generally, the child presents symptomatic episodes that lead to increasingly frequent school absenteeism, which can go as far as dropping out of school altogether [8]. School refusal can last from a few months to several years. Children with SR should

be identified within ten months of the onset of symptoms in order to improve their chances of returning to school [9] [10]. It has been observed that a large third of pupils return to normal schooling, while anxiety-related difficulties persist for another third, who attend school to a greater or lesser extent, but with absences [11]. Finally, for the remaining third, it is not possible to return to school and social adaptation difficulties are identified in adulthood [12] [13].

Scientific articles on SR come from the fields of psychology and medicine. These studies show the value of cognitive-behavioural therapies as part of care, although they are not exclusive to psychological treatment [14] [15]. To our knowledge, there is no scientific literature in the educational sciences about schooling for SR pupils, with practical studies on experimental trials in favour of maintaining schooling for these pupils. Some articles are in an intermediate field between educational psychology and educational sciences [16][17][18][19]. This literature studies the consequences of a systemic functioning of the school within a critical approach for the schooling of pupils in SR [19] [20], which is particularly relevant to our study. However, as SR results in significant absenteeism from school and pupils are at high risk of dropping out if nothing is proposed [21] [22], a better understanding of the possible interventions is needed.

For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the pedagogical continuity implemented with the use of hybrid digital technology enabled pupils who had dropped out of school to resume their education thanks to this form of teaching [23].

2 Preamble: presentation of the school system in France

Pupils in France are educated either in state schools or in private schools under contract or not under contract. Public schools under contract are subject to the same obligations as public schools regarding the organisation of school time, compliance with the curriculum and examinations leading to diplomas. Non-contracted schools are not subject to timetabling or curriculum requirements. Their diplomas are not recognised.

Education is compulsory from the age of 3 to 16. Young people aged 16 to 18 are obliged to undergo training. A pupil's school career is divided into three periods corresponding to three types of institutions: primary school, secondary school: college and *lycée* (high school). Primary school runs from the age of 3 to 11. Secondary education corresponds to schooling at *collège* and *lycée*. The *collège* is a single pathway for every pupil from the age of 11 to 14, from the 6^e class to the 3^e class. An initial orientation stage in the 3^e class, at the end of the *collège*, enables pupils to continue their education at the general and technological high school or the vocational high school. At the general and technological high school, a second orientation stage enables pupils to follow a general pathway to continue their studies at university or to go onto a technological pathway for shorter studies. One-off examinations are held in the final year of high school. Post-bac guidance for higher education is organised at the national level on a platform called *Parcoursup*, where each student applies to higher education establishments. Students are selected on the basis of their academic record, grades, rankings in each subject and assessments.

In secondary school, a mandatory body to prevent dropout meets regularly, at least once a month, to discuss the cases of pupils experiencing difficulties with their

schooling. Staff from several professional categories take part in this working group: teachers, management staff, school life staff and medico-social staff [24]. The aim of this body is to find solutions to prevent pupils from dropping out of school.

All secondary schools have a school life service depending on the size of the school. This service manages everything to do with school attendance and incidents relating to pupils in the school [25]. Depending on its size, each secondary school has the support of a nurse, a national education psychologist and a social worker. These staff are present in the schools on a part-time basis in the case of smaller schools. They provide support to help families, pupils and other school staff deal with medical and social problems.

State schools can benefit from the support of the APADHE service, which is organised for each department and managed by the departmental services of the Ministry of Education. There is a service of this type in each department, which intervenes on a very occasional basis, on an outsourced basis, to alleviate difficulties with schooling when pupils are ill or hospitalised for more than a fortnight, on presentation of a medical certificate.

3 Aim of the study

The scientific literature on school refusal due to anxiety is primarily rooted in psychology. However, anxiety-based school refusal can lead to prolonged absences, potentially resulting in student dropout. Based on scientific literature and semi-structured interviews with staff, families, and students experiencing school refusal anxiety, this study aims to propose a school reception protocol supported by digital technologies. This study raises the question of whether it is possible to keep students with school refusal in school. Specifically, it proposes the conceptualization of a reception protocol utilizing digital technologies to accommodate the needs of students and the resources available in schools. This protocol, developed following interviews with the involved stakeholders, is set to be tested in French schools.

4 Methodology

As we have seen in previous section, to design a protocol for keeping SR pupils in school, it is necessary to draw up an inventory of teaching practices among the various actors involved: National Education staff on the one hand, and SR pupils and their families on the other. We use a qualitative method by grounded theory.

Ten members of the French national education system from various departments: teaching, management, medical-social services and guidance, answered questions in semi-directive interviews. A questionnaire based on three main themes was used to address: (1) staff knowledge of the SR, (2) the use of digital technology in teaching to support pupils' learning, and (3) the various social ties that remain during pupils' SR phase. This choice was made in order to have an overview of professional practices and knowledge in the area of school refusal in relation to the existing scientific literature in the fields of psychology and digital technology.

Similarly, five pupils - contacted via APADHE¹ and the association APS 51² - all of whom had experienced the SR, as well as four mothers, completed a questionnaire on themes related to their school careers during the SR. Students and mothers were volunteers. They were able to express their views on (1) their difficulties, (2) their needs and the facilitating factors at school, and (3) their day-to-day use of digital technology for both personal and educational purposes. The collection of interviews was terminated when the number of responses reached a saturation point.

Qualitative analyse of all the interviews with school staff, SR students and their parents were carried out using grounded theory [26]. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using Nvivo and anonymized. The interviews with national education professionals and those with pupils and mothers were analysed separately. The researcher assigned codes to each transcript using Atlas TI. Double coding was carried out using artificial intelligence. By using double coding the interviews for each population group, we were able to construct categories that enabled us to compare the points of view or representations of each group.

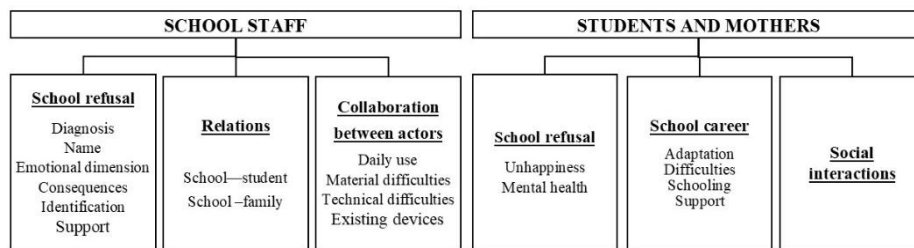


Fig.1 Organisational chart differentiating respondents, themes (level 1) and categories (level 2)

The experiences recounted by the SR pupils and their needs were set against the pedagogical difficulties of the school staff in order to find the actions to be implemented that would respond, in a reasoned way, to each of the problems raised, whether for the pupils and their families or the school staff. The results, based on the comments made by school staff on the one hand, and by pupils and their families on the other, led to the deduction of several major areas of possible remediation, which in turn led to the conceptualisation of a hybrid digital intervention as part of a school reception protocol to limit a deleterious distancing from school [27].

5 Results

5.1 Difficulties in getting teachers to take responsibility

Identifying the SR. National education staff generally have a good perception of the psychological problems of SR pupils in relation to the Berg criteria [2]. These criteria

¹ APADHE: Accompagnement Pédagogique A Domicile, à l'Hôpital ou à l'École (Educational support at home, in hospital or at school)

² APS51: School Phobia Association 51

include the presence of somatic problems (nausea, headaches, sweating, etc.), the absence of antisocial behaviour, a situation known to the parents who are making the expected efforts to send their child to school, and absences with repercussions on schooling. School staff rely on the GPDS, the school dropout prevention group, or the monitoring unit to identify situations in which pupils are absent or unwell, and to put in place regular follow-up with the family. The Principal Education Adviser and teachers are the first people who can alert the school to a pupil's situation. However, at the school level, it is not possible to make a medical diagnosis without an approach from the family outside the school setting, an approach that is often the result of family distress following the child's dropping out of school [28].

Maintaining links with the school. School staff believe that trust is necessary to establish a relationship with pupils. This link can be very different from one staff member to another and depends on their sensitivity. It is often the main teacher who becomes the de facto referent for a student in SR for the current school year.

However, the various players in the national education system emphasised the difficulty of maintaining contact with the pupil when absences become too frequent, long or even almost permanent. They also mentioned the lack of time and resources that would enable them to invest more in the long term. Teachers deplored the feeling of powerlessness in the face of the impossibility of being able to provide continuity in teaching and, above all, of not knowing how to maintain a link with absent SR pupils. Teachers believe that the link with other classmates is also an important factor [19].

Lack of training and information. In their view, the lack of training and the lack of awareness of the problem among the various professionals in the education system means that it is difficult to provide specific care in schools.

National Education staff also note that families are generally disorientated when faced with the SR issue. School staff can sometimes be suspicious of them [16]: *'I often had the impression that when (...) the situation didn't change, we were (...) passing moral judgement on the parents and the child'*. Moreover, when external partners exist to take care of pupils, it is difficult to mobilise them to discuss schooling.

Caring in school. In France, as far as we know, there is no specific official document or identified procedure for monitoring pupils in SR, apart from the generic documents for pupils in a special situation with regard to their schooling. The history of the pupil's progress is not necessarily recorded, which is problematic when the SR lasts several years or when the child changes schools, often with different contacts from one year to the next. The Individualised Reception Plan³ with an adapted timetable is a solution widely used in several departments, but it is considered ineffective by those involved in schools, who stress the problems of transporting pupils who are a long way from schools and the feeling of uselessness for pupils who end up no longer attending [29].

Outsourced care is often the preferred option. APADHE can support the schooling of SR pupils under certain conditions, which vary from one department to another, and for just a few hours a week. The National Centre for Distance Learning⁴ is regularly

³ PAI: Projet d'Accueil d'Individualisé (Individualised Reception Plan)

⁴ CNED: Centre National d'Education à Distance (National Centre for Distance Education)

requested by the families of SR children. They do not necessarily realise the workload for the pupil and the pedagogical support necessary to invest for them to progress [30].

Digital use by teachers and pupils. In French schools, a digital working environment is made available to the school community. It provides access to digital tools that vary from region to region and from school to school, including email, timetables, attendance and absence records, grades and pupil skills assessments, data storage and collaborative applications such as Teams and Moodle.

According to the participants in the survey, digital technology could be a solution for keeping SR pupils in school. Teachers explained that they are able to rely on the digital tools available to them in schools because they make teaching easier, even if, overall, they are time-consuming to implement in the classroom.

Containment during the Covid pandemic led to a beneficial change in the use of digital tools, which the staff interviewed said would be difficult to reverse. Teachers said that technical difficulties had slowed down and discouraged the development of digital use in schools [31] [32].

However, use in lower and upper secondary schools is very different and depends on the teacher [33]. Digital technology is mainly used for sharing information and transmitting documents. It is considered time-consuming, and mastery of the tools depends on the skills acquired by teachers. In lower secondary schools, use tends to be devoted to putting lessons online for pupils who are absent. Some staff noted that it is easier for pupils to return after an absence if they have been able to follow the progress of the course remotely.

Pupils' equipment and access to the Internet vary greatly from one family to another, depending on where they live or their social status, which also acts as a brake on wider use. Some school stakeholders have spoken of a digital divide that is prevalent in certain social groups or rural areas [33]. Teachers have also noted a wide disparity in pupils' mastery of digital tools. In their view, pupils need to learn how to use digital technology [34].

While digital technology can indeed be a solution for keeping SR pupils in school, the school authorities have a number of points to make: the pupils must have real digital skills, the work must be done in a neutral place in the school, the course content must be centralised in the same place known to the pupil, and finally, it is important that a coordinator oversees such a scheme.

5.2 The needs of school refusers

A long journey from wandering to care. SR students and their families report that there is a long delay between the onset of the disorder and the diagnosis, which can take several months or even more than a year. The first visible signs are physical symptoms reminiscent of seasonal illnesses or recurring temporary crises (stomach aches, vomiting, etc.). The absences become more frequent and longer, sometimes culminating in the child dropping out of school altogether. The family then belatedly embarks on a course of treatment that generally leads to psychological care, with or without medication. It is the parents who, through chance encounters or internet searches, put the words "school refusal" on the ailment from which their child suffers.

Doctors, for their part, diagnose anxiety or depressive disorders without mentioning the SR.

For some pupils, investigations to determine the cognitive profile are necessary to understand the causes of the anxiety or depressive disorders associated with SR. It is often during therapy that the practitioner suggests that tests be carried out, even though early signs could have alerted both the teaching staff and the parents [35].

School environmental factors. Although the origin of the anxiety disorders developed by pupils and leading to an SR may or may not be linked to the school environment, the stress generated by the school is real and can contribute to increasing the pupil's state of anxiety. Described in the scientific literature [19] the environmental factors that generate stress are discussed by the respondents in their interviews. The group that makes up a class can exert social pressure that causes discomfort in pupils who are already fragile: *'Some people were making remarks because I was going out to go to the toilet'*. It's up to teachers to manage excesses, which can have serious consequences within a class. The number of pupils in cramped classrooms can also be a source of anxiety: *'It would have been nice, and if possible even nicer, not to be in a class of 36 in 10 square metre'*.

Random educational continuity. Parents say that a lack of knowledge about SR and a lack of training for national education staff mean that they are dealt with unevenly from one school to another. Uncertainty about the future of schooling causes anxiety and does not help SR pupils to break out of their isolation.

Oscillating between confusion and judgment, national education staff do not seem to give the same answers or make the same proposals depending on the school. The consequences for the implementation of adjustments to schooling are reflected in delays in taking charge. Parents explained the difficulties they had in getting their children to attend classes, which were then passed on by teachers at their discretion. Access to lessons is a recurring problem, and some teachers even refuse to send lessons to absent pupils. Retrieving documents from classmates can be time-consuming and inefficient for recurrent or long periods of absence. Transmission could easily be done using the digital tools that pupils master through basic but everyday skills.

Families are looking for every possible way to set up a parallel system of private tuition to compensate for, or even make up for, the shortcomings linked to poor supervision by teaching staff. Parents have to turn to tutoring solutions that sometimes cost money. In the long run, it is certain that pupils will acquire real autonomy.

Digital use by pupils forced to live far from school. All students claim to have mastered digital tools, particularly through their daily use of them: texting, videos, downloads, emails, etc. [36]. The computer is a tool that they experimented with extensively during the Covid pandemic. Some play online video games and are very comfortable with digital technology. However, remote social interaction via videoconferencing, with or without a camera or microphone, seems to be very difficult, including face-to-face interaction with the teacher. SR students indicated that they did not like interacting via videoconferencing: *"If I think I'm going to have a video with my math's teacher, I'm going to get anxious a lot sooner. I've got a video with her, what's*

she going to say to me?”, “*I knew that if I turned on the microphone after a few minutes, I'd have an anxiety attack.*”

The link with classmates does not seem to be an essential element for them in terms of social life, contrary to what the teachers said. SR pupils often express the fact that they have become estranged over time. At some point in their lives, SR students needed to isolate themselves to feel better. However, social networks are a social mediator that can prove useful in maintaining a link, albeit at a distance, for SR students.

The relationship with the school or the need for a mentor. During the course of their SR, which can last several years, the pupils' families also deplore the lack of continuity in their relationship with the school and the uncertainties created by the school system. Often, depending on the chance encounters and in situations where the pupil was best looked after, a member of staff from the school became more involved without this being specified in any arrangements. A special bond was forged between the student and this impromptu referent, who acted as a mediator with the school community [17].

6 Discussion: the proposed protocol

The results of the qualitative analyses made it possible to define the problems that determine whether SR pupils stay in school. We were able to put forward a number of key areas for remedial action to help SR pupils stay in school and propose the conceptualisation of a new ecological system based on a program of digital actions to meet the needs of SR pupils and the difficulties they face in staying in school, both in terms of intervention and follow-up over time. However, this kind of intervention requires secondary school teachers to change their pedagogical paradigm [37]. Indeed, the usual reference framework for face-to-face teaching is being transformed into a reference framework combining distance learning for some subjects and face-to-face teaching for others. The qualitative analyses therefore enabled us to define the following intervention protocol.

6.1 Student profiling: a change of tool

Secondary school pupils with SR are usually identified because of their absenteeism. They are treated in the same way as other pupils and are often associated with dropping out of school without any solution being found for their psychological difficulties [38]. However, the SCREEN tool⁵ can be used to help identify SR in schools [9]. Developed as part of work on SR in psychology, this test has a sensitivity of .94 and a specificity of .88, i.e. the test is better at detecting true positives (sensitivity) but less effective at ruling out true negatives (specificity). This leads to over-recognition. The test is not a medical diagnostic tool, but it can be used as a first line of defence to determine the reason for absenteeism, rather than allowing a situation to persist for months without appropriate school-based care. It can also encourage the family to move more quickly towards seeking care and a medical diagnosis. It should be remembered that the earlier the SR is dealt with, the better the prognosis for returning to school [9].

⁵ SCREEN: School REFusal EvaluationN

Once this primary assessment has been carried out, if the pupil presents moderate symptoms of SR and is absent from school on a sporadic basis, he or she can benefit from the school reception protocol, with the most serious cases, involving complete withdrawal from school, requiring medical care as a priority. The pupil must not be enrolled in a support scheme to avoid having to deal with a large number of people, nor must he or she be experiencing serious difficulties at school, as the protocol requires the use of digital technology, which could exacerbate the pupil's difficulties [39].

6.2 Organisation of schooling: a mixed approach

In secondary education, all teaching is exclusively face-to-face. If a paradigm shift is possible, teaching practices will have to evolve towards a hybrid approach combining face-to-face and distance learning [37]. In a society that is constantly evolving from a digital point of view, this new way of learning needs to be questioned for students who are prevented from learning, and more specifically for students with special needs [20]. Of course, no learning model should be favoured over another. However, teaching practices are more effective if teachers adapt their teaching methods to the educational objective in question. In an increasingly inclusive society, digital technology is a solution that should be implemented because it allows adaptations that are not possible in a face-to-face setting for all students, including those with special needs [39]. In fact, it makes it possible to get around several difficulties linked to the school environment and, as a result of absences, to be able to recover lessons. It is also a question of acting on school environmental factors to avoid deleterious stress in the long term for the SR pupil [9].

The school reception protocol we designed provides for a school timetable with time spent in class with the other pupils and time in a quiet room for the SR pupil. These times in the school can be modulated and planned in advance with the family and the pupil, depending on the degree of SR, the pupil's official timetable and the teachers involved in putting the lessons online. Adaptations must be made for a maximum of three subjects, given the tiring nature of computer work for the pupil. These subjects must be taken entirely remotely, to avoid difficulties in synchronising remote learning with face-to-face classroom work. The timetable is reviewed every two months and may not be continued for more than six months to avoid wear and tear on the use of digital technology [40]. Given the duration of an SR and the experiment underway, this parameter may be revised upwards or downwards.

Hosting SR students at school in an appropriate room, such as the school library for example, helps to overcome the problem of the digital divide for some families by providing access to a computer and an internet connection with sufficient speed [41]. Pupils are also less anxious because they can take time out to breathe in peace and quiet without being confronted by the whole class. Arrival and departure can also be deferred in relation to the flow of pupils. Occasional support from an educational assistant or teaching assistant can also help pupils with their learning difficulties.

Although teachers are not sufficiently trained in the use of digital tools, it is still possible to find staff who manage to integrate them into their day-to-day teaching [33]. Teachers can be mobilised in the school to put lessons online, following the same

progression as the student's original class. The teachers involved in distance learning are not necessarily the teachers on the student's initial teaching team. The permanent link between the teachers on the student's teaching team and the contributing teachers must be ensured by a third party. This could be the referent, whose role is described below. The student, in turn, uploads the work he has done onto the digital space to be corrected and guided by the teacher, who can communicate with him electronically to provide clarification or assistance to help him understand the course properly.

The tiredness of the SR student must be taken into account in relation to the amount of work required at the school level. Lessons should be reduced to the most important knowledge that will be needed to continue schooling at a higher level. The work required should not be disproportionate and should be commensurate with the student's ability. It is advisable to ask for homework to be returned once a week on a specific day set out in the timetable defined beforehand in order, once again, to reduce the pupil's anxiety. As the health of SR students fluctuates, and as a result their general tiredness, indulgence must prevail with regard to homework that is not returned on time.

In order to avoid the pitfalls that occurred during the Covid pandemic, the protocol for welcoming students to the school must provide for the use of a single digital space that is known not only to the various people involved but also to the students themselves. Most schools have a digital workspace. This may be a dedicated storage space in this environment or private software used at school⁶. The proliferation of communication spaces or document repositories should be avoided.

Assessments should be avoided because they are too anxiety-provoking [9]. However, the school system in France does require numerical assessments for certain levels of the class, in relation to the computerised procedures for guidance⁷ or for continuous assessment in the first and final years of secondary school [42]. Generally speaking, teachers are able to assess their pupils on the basis of a set of criteria such as their attitude to work, the quality of their work and the regularity of their learning. It may be possible to envisage an overall assessment over the usual school periods: term or semester, in the form of a single mark based on the above criteria.

The application of this reception protocol must be the subject of a contractual document, the existence of which not only makes the pupil's care at the school official, but also records the history of the pupil's care. It is essential to be able to trace the progress of the reception protocol over several months. A document specific to the SR can be contracted between the school, the pupil and the family as long as no medical diagnosis has been made. It includes an adapted timetable and the arrangements for the pupil's reception at the school and keeps a record of the pupil's history throughout the SR phase.

This welcome protocol is designed for secondary school pupils in *collèges*, but can also be implemented in high school. The protocol can also be put in place for pupils

⁶ In France, applications such as Pronote, Teams and Moodle are available to the school community.

⁷ Affelnet is the computerised procedure used at the end of lower secondary school for choosing between general and technological upper secondary schools or vocational upper secondary schools, as well as at the end of the second year of upper secondary school. Parcousup is the national guidance platform for higher education.

with special needs. It can also be used to ensure educational continuity for pupils returning from hospitalisation and needing a gradual return to school.

6.3 An advisor to facilitate links between students, their families and teachers

As the ultimate aim is for the student to return to school full-time, it is important to maintain a privileged and continuous link between the school and the student, even in the event of further absences. A member of the school's staff is therefore mobilised to ensure this continuity and to centralise information about the pupil, liaising with the various parties involved: distance learning teachers and members of the teaching team, the family and the school management. It is preferable to avoid a relationship of authority between the pupil and the adviser and to ensure that the person identified can monitor the situation over several months or even more than one year. A logbook for the referent may be useful for recording the pupil's progress and adapting the protocol.

The mentor must ensure continuity of learning between the distance and face-to-face courses. If the student is able to return to the classroom at a given time, they must be able to come back having received the same educational input and not feel out of step.

The referent ensures that information relating to the life of the school is passed on correctly: administrative documents, and one-off events organised as part of the life of the class, even if the pupil is unable to take part. His or her role should be to facilitate a good understanding of the pupil's situation and the protocol for welcoming him or her into the school community. He must reassure the pupil and guide him through his school career [17].

6.4 Experimentation on progress and first results

This system is currently being tested in several *collèges* as part of a longitudinal exploratory study. The current experiment aims to answer the following research question: is it possible to maintain schooling using digital technologies ?

The protocol has been offered in several secondary schools in France on a voluntary basis. The protocol is offered to families of pupils suffering from school refusal. The study is due to run until early 2025. It is planned to monitor the progress of around fifteen secondary school pupils.

The initial results of the current experiment indicate that if the pupil is identified and supported at an early stage in relation to their school refusal, it is possible to maintain their schooling by implementing a partial hybridisation of courses and support from a mentor within the school. The mentor appears to have a decisive role to play. The delay in taking charge in the school, upstream of a medical diagnosis which sometimes takes several months, leads to a break in schooling which is difficult to remedy even by offering hybrid courses and a lighter timetable. Students who have already been out of school for several months are unable to return to school even if the protocol is offered.

There are several factors that allow the protocol to be implemented in school: the will of the headteacher and the presence of teachers who use digital tools in their professional practice.

7 Conclusion

Initial results seem that it would be possible to keep SR pupils in school thanks to a school reception protocol based on digital technology. This protocol responds to the needs of the pupils and takes into account the difficulties associated with their absence for those involved in the school. It also aims to identify SR pupils more quickly so that they can be taken into care earlier.

For pupils with special educational needs, the aim is to ensure continuity in their education and a smoother future at school through a program of actions designed to reduce the stress associated with the various environmental factors at school. For those involved in schools, the protocol is proving to be not only a solution but also a unique opportunity to invest in digital teaching methods for pupils with special needs. However, it is possible that this change in pedagogical paradigm will be met with a form of resistance to change on the part of school staff, in relation to the use of digital tools in an alternative pedagogy between distance and face-to-face teaching.

CRedit Authors Statement. **Angélique Ferrandon-Vepierre:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – Original draft preparation. **Ines Di Loreto:** Writing – Review and Editing, Supervision. **Yann Verchier:** Writing – Review and Editing, Supervision.

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