

Extended services in practice - A summary of evaluation evidence for head teachers

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

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1. Introduction

This report offers an overview of the research evidence on the outcomes that extended services can produce, and on how those services can be made most effective. It has something to say to all practitioners and decision makers who are working on extended services. However, it is particularly aimed at head teachers who are developing services in and around their schools

The report draws on the work of the national extended services evaluation, which ran between 2009 and 2011. It summarises the findings of that evaluation, but synthesises this with evidence from the evaluation of the national full service extended schools initiative (which ran from 2003 to 2006), from evaluations of other ‘extended schools’ initiatives in the past decade, and from other relevant evaluations both in this country and elsewhere. The detailed evidence is not cited in the text, but an annotated bibliography is provided so that interested readers can follow up the primary sources for themselves.

The evidence is not perfect, and undoubtedly contains gaps and ambiguities. However, taken as a whole, it outlines some clear directions that head teachers might pursue. In the next section, we summarise some key messages that the evidence holds for head teachers. In the following sections, we set out some of the background to those messages. In section 3, we look in more detail at what the evidence says about how to make extended services work in practice. Finally, in section 4 we look at what the evidence says about the outcomes that head teachers might reasonably expect from the development of extended services.

2. The key messages

Message 1. Be clear about aims

Although a ‘core offer’ was made explicit by the last Government it is now up to school leaders and their partners locally to decide what services and activities should be offered, how they should be configured, and what aims they should have. Given that extended services can serve a multiplicity of aims and that local contexts vary widely, this is not a straightforward task.

If extended services are to be as effective as possible, the evidence suggests that head teachers need to develop a clear set of aims around which all their work – including both their work on extended services and their work on teaching and learning – is built. The school’s partners in other agencies and in the community will need to be involved in formulating those aims, and the head teacher will need to be proactively involved in ensuring their delivery.

Message 2: Be realistic about outcomes

Being clear about aims also means being realistic about the sorts of outcomes that extended services can and cannot achieve. Extended services are no substitute for school improvement measures focused on raising overall levels of pupil attainment and school performance. However, the evidence suggests that they can sit alongside such measures as part of an overall package aimed at enabling all pupils and their families and communities to do well.

In particular, head teachers can realistically expect extended services to have significant, positive impacts on those children, families and other adults who face the greatest difficulties. Access to services can support both children and adults in dealing with personal and social problems, build their confidence, and sustain their engagement with learning. Extended services can also impact positively on school ethos and on the local standing of the school. In time, there may be a wider impact on community wellbeing.

Message 3: Develop, and work with, partnerships

Partnership working amongst schools, and between schools and statutory and voluntary agencies, is an essential feature of extended services. The evidence suggests that partnerships are important for extending the capacity of the school, enhancing the resources available to the school and increasing the stability of those resources. Partnerships are also important with the children, families and community members who use services. This enables head teachers to draw upon the strengths of these users and to help build their capacity for solving their own problems.

In some cases, partnerships can be the basis for the development of coherent, area approaches capable of tackling issues that are beyond the capacity of the school alone to address. However, partnerships are by no means easy to develop, and heads have to be prepared to invest time and resource in a long-term process of building trust.

Message 4: Evaluate

Extended services in action look very different in different places. Existing research evidence is useful for offering broad guidance to head teachers, but it is not enough in itself. It is important that heads develop appropriate means of evaluating what goes on in and around their own schools.

The performance data through which the work of schools is routinely monitored are useful in this respect. However, heads and their partners need to draw on a wide range of evidence, and to be prepared to track this evidence in some cases over a number of years.

3. Extended services in practice

3.1 Building on experience

Although the term ‘extended services’ is a relatively new one, the reality is that schools have long offered additional activities to their pupils, worked hard to engage parents, and liaised with other agencies to meet children’s and families’ needs. Efforts to extend and formalise this work can be traced back at least until the 1920s in England, and have been common elsewhere – particularly in the USA. By the time the first national initiatives in this field were launched in this country, relatively large numbers of schools were already offering additional services to children and their families. These services developed rapidly in recent years, and by the end of the last decade the large majority of schools were heavily involved in extended services provision.

The implication is that head teachers need not see the development of extended services as uncharted territory. There is considerable experience already in the system about how schools can play a broader role in the lives of children, families and communities. The first task for head teachers may be to access that experience locally, rather than feeling that they have to re-invent the wheel for themselves.

3.2 How schools develop extended services

Although head teachers can draw on others’ experience, it is also the case that they have to customise their approaches to meet local circumstances. Virtually every evaluation of extended services (and similar initiatives) shows that each school’s approach is distinctive, even where schools are working within a common programme or set of shared guidance.

With this in mind, the three brief accounts which follow show how different schools have interpreted the extended services agenda so that it makes sense in their situations. The accounts were drawn up in the course of the work for the national evaluation of extended services between 2009 and 2010:

Primary 1

This school is located in an urban area with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Pupils come from a very broad range of ethnic backgrounds. There is a high level of transience in the area, and many pupils arrive directly from abroad.

The school has a long history of offering extended services. In a situation where many pupils face significant disadvantages, educational achievement, wellbeing and life chances are seen as closely bound up with one another. The school, therefore, views extended services as integral to its core purposes, offering a means of tackling pupils' personal and social problems, enriching their experiences, and engaging their families. It offers a breakfast club, after school club, holiday play scheme, and a wide range of enrichment activities. There is a Family Support Team who can respond to child and family problems, and who offer parental support groups and family learning courses. The school also has strong links with the local further education college which delivers 'first step' courses on site and signposts participants to other education and employment opportunities. The community has access to a community cookery room and there are volunteering opportunities at the school.

Because extended services are seen as integral to the school's way of working, much of the provision is run 'in-house'. The extended services coordinator is a long-standing member of teaching staff and many activities are run by teaching and support staff members, with active participation by the head teacher. However, the school also works closely with other agencies, and the SENCO, who is also the deputy head and child protection and safeguarding officer, leads on swift and easy access to specialist services.

The school evaluates the impact of its work through a combination of performance data, monitoring of participation, external scrutiny (for instance, from the local authority) and, above all, intimate knowledge of its pupils and their families. This suggests that its services and activities are viewed positively by children and their families, that they feel safe and secure in the school environment, and that there are marked impacts on the progress of some of the most vulnerable pupils. This seems likely to have contributed to the 'outstanding' Ofsted inspection grade achieved by the school.

Secondary 1

Secondary 1 is a specialist sports college, located in an area of significant deprivation which has suffered from the demise of heavy industry and is now characterised by third generation unemployment. Not surprisingly, the school reports a range of associated

social problems including low aspirations, alcohol-related anti-social behaviour amongst young people, and above average levels of teenage pregnancy and obesity. Secondary 1 is a designated 'healthy school' with a history of extended services development spanning over a decade. It has been part of various area-based initiatives and participated in some of the earlier extended schools initiatives. School performance (in terms, for instance of levels of attainment and attendance) has improved in recent years. School leaders argue that extended services have played a major part in this, though other school improvement efforts have also been involved.

Extended services are seen as a way to improve the social and educational inclusion of young people, and, ultimately, to halt the reproduction of disadvantage that has characterised the area. In practice, this means extended services are seen as supporting inclusion and well-being, impacting on learning outcomes, and improving the school's performance. However, this is done through a broad approach, working with cluster primary schools, supported by the local authority strategy, and working on the full range of outcomes for children.

Extended services provision focuses mainly on pupils through two strands of activity. The first is concerned with enabling young people to engage fully in learning and involves study support alongside a range of multi-agency support, including an area-based multi-agency team. The second relates to child wellbeing and, in particular a range of health-related initiatives around obesity, fitness, sexual health, alcohol abuse and risk taking. Work around risk taking explicitly selects the 'movers and shakers' to act as role models with their peers and develop good relationships between young people and professionals. Activities to enhance pupil voice and democracy also feature as an important aspect of this wellbeing strand. Pupil consultation is built into most activities, including opportunities for pupils to meet community representatives to discuss and inform decisions about the improvement of community services.

The school plays a leading role in a large cluster of schools that have formed a soft federation and acquired trust status. There is both a cluster extended services coordinator and a school-based coordinator. The cluster is part of a structure of area-based working by children's services in the local authority. There is an area children's group which the head of Secondary 1 chairs and which feeds intelligence to the children's trust. In turn, the local authority commissions services from the cluster.

The impact and outcomes of extended service provision are monitored on a quarterly basis, using a framework of indicators (such as participation rates, pupil feedback, local crime statistics, pupil health indicators, and survey responses). These often draw on data provided by the school's partner agencies. These indicators suggest that, in addition to

improvements in overall attainments and school performance, extended services are impacting on pupils' engagement, confidence and health.

Secondary 2

Secondary 2 is the only secondary school in a market town serving a wide rural catchment characterised by socio-economic diversity. The school has specialist Sports and Business and Enterprise status. Extended services developed from its long history as a community school and from a well-established inclusion agenda. A partnership of schools serving the town has been formed to pursue three common objectives: increasing attendance, improving behaviour and preventing exclusion. By developing its provision collaboratively, the partnership aims to encourage economies of scale, prevent duplication, assist transition between the schools, and facilitate a family-focused approach to tackling children's difficulties.

Extended services are delivered across the partnership, which means that a wide range of provision can be accessed from the school. This includes childcare, parent support and family learning activities, counselling, study support, leisure activities, and a multi-agency support group. The partnership works with a range of private and public providers. There is also an emphasis on user involvement in shaping services, in the form of a parents' forum (created by parents themselves) and a learners' group. There is also a common development strategy across all agencies in the town

The partnership operates through eight extended services operational groups working to agreed action plans that support town-wide objectives. These groups are monitored by a Partnership Board, chaired by the head teacher of Secondary 2, and consisting of the school heads, and representatives of partner agencies. An 'Every Child Matters Manager' has been appointed to oversee and support the work of the operational groups. She is a deputy head responsible for inclusion. Latterly, the local authority decided to form 'Local Partnerships for Children' reporting to children's services planning groups. In response, Secondary 2 expanded its partnership to include more schools. Funding for extended services provision and for the posts needed to deliver and lead that provision comes from a per-pupil contribution from each partnership school, and from fundraising activities and grant applications.

Much of the extended services provision in this school has historically been targeted on particularly vulnerable pupils, and evaluation has taken the form of monitoring the outcomes of individual cases. From this, the school is able to identify many pupils who have done significantly better than they might otherwise have been expected, in terms of engagement with education, wellbeing and the need for referral to specialist services.

These three schools are clearly very different from each other. They illustrate the extent to which head teachers – working with their partners – have to think creatively about what is needed in and around their schools. However, there are some common features in how these schools have developed extended services, and some common issues that these and many other head teachers are likely to encounter. In the following sections, we explore these in more detail.

3.3 Effective leadership of extended services

Although each of the schools described above has its own distinctive approach, it is clear that their head teachers play a crucial role in leading the development of extended services. In fact, there is a growing body of evidence on how heads set about this task. It shows that:

- *Effective head teachers take a lead.* The heads in the schools described above are typical in being proactively engaged in the development of extended services. The evidence suggests that this engagement stems from a set of attitudes and values – in effect, a social and ethical purpose – which leads heads to see the academic aims of the school as inextricably linked to wider concerns about children’s lives and the circumstances in which they develop. This linkage often seems unavoidable to head teachers working in areas where pupils experience multiple disadvantages. However, as we see in secondary 2 above, head teacher commitment to extended services can emerge in a wide range of contexts.
- *Effective head teachers set up management structures.* Although the commitment of heads is crucial, they cannot manage extended services on their own, particularly in larger schools. They need to set up some sort of dedicated management structure, usually revolving round a school-based coordinator. S/he may be a teacher, but may equally well come from another professional background, for instance in family support or community development. Sustaining this post requires a commitment of resource and is a signal that extended services are seen as important in the school. For the same reason, where the coordinator post works well, heads delegate responsibility but remain actively engaged in the development of extended services and do not allow the coordinator to become isolated from the rest of the school.
- *Effective head teachers develop clarity of purpose.* Extended services can serve many different purposes and it is easy for provision to become unfocused.

Effective head teachers, however, like those in the schools described above, develop a clear sense of why they want their schools to offer extended services. In particular, they are able to link the purposes of extended services to the core purpose of the school in improving learning outcomes for children

In doing this, head teachers have to strike a number of balances. They have to decide how far services are aimed at enhancing learning for all, and/ or how far they are aimed at removing barriers to learning that some pupils face. They have to decide how far services should focus only on pupils (and perhaps their families), and how far the school should play a wider role in the communities it serves. They also have to decide how far services should be about supporting children and adults, and how far they should be about capacity building so that people can tackle their own problems and take charge of their own lives. Effective head teachers strike these balances in ways that match the circumstances of the school. However, they do so in the context of a thoughtful analysis of how pupils' learning in school relates to a wider set of factors in families and communities

- *Effective head teachers manage resources well.* Extended services tend to rely on additional funding over and above schools' 'core' budgets. Often this funding is short-term, which makes the sustainability of services more difficult, particularly in times of financial constraints. This has been a major concern of head teachers in England in recent years.

Effective head teachers respond in two ways. First, because they see extended services as closely aligned with the school's core purposes, they are prepared to commit real resource to developing and sustaining those services. Second, they view resourcing issues flexibly, drawing on a range of funding streams to support provision. They also value resources 'in kind', working, as in the schools above, with partner organisations to establish common interests to which each can contribute resource without any financial transaction being necessary. In all of this, head teachers are assisted considerably by proactive extended services coordinators, particularly where they have a remit to pursue funding and develop partnerships with other agencies.

- *Effective head teachers develop partnerships.* All head teachers have to be skilled at managing their own staff and steering their own institutions. However, the development of extended services requires that they (and their coordinators) are equally skilled at working with other schools, and with other agencies and organisations.

This is not straightforward. Schools' partners cannot be commanded. They have their own management structures, budgetary constraints and priorities,

which means that partnership can sometimes be a frustrating business. The key seems to be a genuine commitment to collaboration, and a willingness to nurture partnerships over the long term so that mutual trust can develop. In particular, it seems to be important that schools and their partners develop an understanding of where their interests coincide, and where they can all benefit by working together. When this happens, schools not only increase the resources on which they can call, but also benefit by drawing on the perspectives of other agencies about what is needed locally.

The area-wide developments in the two secondary schools described above are particularly significant. As schools' work on extended services has matured in recent years, the development of joint approaches across clusters of schools, across services operating in a particular geographical area, or across the local authority area as a whole have become increasingly important. Head teachers are increasingly thinking in terms of the area- or authority-wide strategies to which their schools can contribute, rather than of centring all provision on the school itself. In many cases, this means that heads play a key role in formulating those strategies and in coordinating action beyond their own institutions.

- *Effective head teachers involve pupils, families and communities.* Many schools consult users about the provision they are developing. However, this consultation may be limited, and even basic information about the services and activities on offer may not reach all families and community members. Effective head teachers go beyond simple market research approaches to make sure that children, families and communities not only know what is available, but are involved in its development and, in some cases, in its delivery. This is important for building capacity locally, and for ensuring that provision is not shaped only in accordance with professional priorities.
- *Effective head teachers evaluate.* Head teachers are used to interrogating data to monitor the performance of their schools in terms of pupil outcomes. Many of them are equally keen to collect data which will show how far extended services are having the kinds of impacts they anticipate. This is more difficult than monitoring school performance because many intended outcomes – increasing pupil wellbeing, for instance, or promoting engagement with learning – lack easily-available quantitative measures.

Many head teachers struggle with this issue and are anxious about how to demonstrate the effectiveness of their school's work. However, some are willing to value a wide range of types of evidence. This will certainly include standard performance data, but may also draw on interviews with children and adults,

participation data, child and family case histories, testimony from other agencies, focus group discussions, and a range of other data sources. This diverse evidence can be brought together within a 'theory of change' framework of the kind used in the national evaluations of full service schools and extended services. This enables heads to assess the impacts services are having in the short term, and to judge whether they are likely to produce the long-term outcomes that are intended.

4. What can extended services achieve?

There is now a growing evidence base on the outcomes that extended services in this country, and equivalent initiatives elsewhere, can produce. In addition to evaluations of extended schools themselves, there are also evaluations of separate services and activities, such as study support, multi-agency teams in schools, parenting support and out of hours activities. Taken together, this evidence suggests that head teachers can have considerable confidence that the extended services provision they develop will have important positive impacts on children, families, communities, and on the schools themselves. However, it also suggests that heads will need to be careful in:

- identifying outcomes and targeting individuals where extended services have a real chance of making a difference;
- combining extended services with other strategies for improving outcomes; and
- ensuring that there is ongoing monitoring to make sure that the outcomes they intend actually materialise in and around their schools.

4.1 Impacts on children, families and adults facing disadvantage

Much extended services provision is targeted on children and adults facing various kinds of economic, social and educational disadvantage. There is relatively strong evidence that extended services can help overcome or ameliorate disadvantages of this kind. They can maintain children in school, help them engage with learning, and put them onto productive pathways after school. They can help families deal with crises, encourage better parenting practices, and enable adults to move into learning and employment pathways. This in turn has positive impacts on children, their learning in school, and their life chances.

There is evidence that the multi-dimensional problems which children, families and other adults face can be tackled more effectively where services are clustered together in and around school, and that many individuals and families who benefit would not otherwise receive services. There is also evidence that investment in services is repaid – at least in schools where provision is well-established – by the long-term benefits service users and the rest of society receive in return. However, the effectiveness of services depends on how carefully they are targeted, and school systems are sometimes not well developed in this respect. Schools seem to do best when they have explicit targeting systems which combine personal knowledge with ‘objective’ data, and the information that can be elicited from other agencies.

4.2 Impacts on communities

Although the evidence is by no means conclusive, there are some indications that the impacts on individuals and families can ripple out into wider impacts on communities as a whole. Extended services can play a part in up-skilling the local work force, developing community cohesion, tackling community issues, and creating employment opportunities directly (schools tend to be significant employers of local people) and indirectly. The effects are likely to be small in the first instance, and there is no reason to believe that schools acting alone can transform the fortunes of entire communities. However, there is some reason to believe that school effects may grow over time, and that they may be multiplied where schools act as part of a coordinated area strategy. The implication for head teachers, therefore, is that, where they aim to impact on local communities, they need to develop long-term strategies in collaboration with a range of partners.

4.3 Impacts on school ethos

There is some evidence that extended services, such as out of hours activities and the promotion of ‘pupil voice’, can play a part in developing more positive attitudes amongst pupils to themselves (in terms, for instance, of self-esteem), to school and to learning. They may also foster better relations between pupils and teachers. The effects are likely to depend on sustained activities on the part of the school, and sustained participation on the part of pupils. These effects seem worth pursuing by head teachers, though again as part of a long-term strategy.

4.4 Impacts on school standing

Schools which offer extended services, particularly where these involve engagement with families and community members, may well improve their local standing. Parents may be more willing to involve themselves with the school, families may be more willing to send their children to the school, and community members may view the school as a community resource. Since head teachers are likely to value community and parent support, these outcomes are worth pursuing.

4.5 Impacts on overall levels of attainment and school performance

Where extended services are appropriately targeted, they can impact on pupils’ attainments. This is the case, as we have seen, where services are targeted at the most disadvantaged pupils. It is also the case where the menu of extended services on offer

includes components clearly focused on raising attainment – most notably, in the form of study support. In both of these cases, the impacts on individual pupils are likely to be important, but impacts on overall levels of school performance may be more modest.

In practice, schools usually combine the development of extended services with a package of measures aimed at school improvement. It seems likely that it is the more explicitly teaching and learning aspects of those packages that impact most directly on overall levels of attainment. However, head teachers may see extended services as a means of creating the conditions under which their teaching and learning approaches can work, or look to them for more sustainable improvement in the long term, once some ‘quick wins’ have been achieved. Such expectations are not unreasonable, but evidence which might support or refute them is simply missing.

The implication for head teachers seems to be that extended services should be seen as a complement to more standard means of achieving gains in overall levels of attainment rather than as an alternative.

4.6 The need for clarity and evaluation

The evidence base on extended services is far from perfect. Schools are complex places, and extended services are multi-strand and highly variable from school to school. The research evidence, therefore, can only offer general guidance about the outcomes that might be expected. It cannot give assurances that those outcomes will materialise in every case.

This places a considerable onus on head teachers to be clear about what is actually happening in and around their schools. Given the array of outcomes that are possible and the many ways in which services can be configured, heads need to be clear about their aims, and sure that their services are aligned with those aims. Above all, they need to monitor and evaluate the impacts that their particular package of extended services has in their situation.

5. The challenge for head teachers

A major concern of all head teachers is with what happens in classrooms, and with how the quality of provision there enables the school's pupils to do well educationally, and so to enjoy enhanced life chances. However, how well children do *within* classrooms is closely bound up with their lives *beyond* the classroom. It is influenced by the wider chances to learn that they have, the way they view themselves as learners and as individuals, the support they receive from their families and communities, and the opportunities that are available to them in the world beyond the school gates.

The evidence summarised here suggests that extended services can markedly increase the capacity of schools to make a difference to these wider factors in children's lives. However, it also suggests that there is no blueprint for how schools should maximise this capacity. Head teachers therefore face considerable challenges in using what we now know about extended services to underpin provision that is effective and sustainable in particular circumstances of each school.

At the same time, there are many opportunities for head teachers in the current context. They have greater flexibility in the use of the school's resources, and most of them lead staff with a wider range of skills and expertise than in the past. In many places, partnerships between schools and with other agencies are well established. There is also a great deal of experience across the system of delivering effective extended services, and the potential for schools to learn from each other is considerable. In many places, therefore, it is already clear that, as experience grows and as provision matures, extended services change from being something additional and peripheral to the school's core business and become an integral part of what schools do.

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