
Extended Services Evaluation: End of Year One Report

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Background

Extended services in schools are one of the key delivery mechanisms of the Every Child Matters Agenda and the Children's Plan. The Government has set out a 'core offer' of extended services that they want all children to be able to access through schools by 2010:

- A varied menu of activities
- Childcare 8am – 6pm 48 weeks per year for primary schools
- Parenting support including family learning
- Swift and easy access to targeted and specialist support services
- Community access to school facilities.

The evaluation of extended services in schools aims to measure: how successful schools have been in offering a range of services; whether services meet the needs of users; how successful extended services have been in improving outcomes and raising standards of achievement; other key outcomes and benefits of the programme; and the long term benefits and cost effectiveness of extended services. In order to measure this, the evaluation will attempt to measure a range of outcomes, including attainment.

Key findings

- Two thirds of schools were offering all five elements of the full core offer, and the remaining third were all offering at least some elements. Secondary schools were more likely than primary and special schools to be offering the full core offer.
- There was a distinct gap between the services schools were offering, and the services parents were aware of their child's school offering, particularly with regards to holiday activities and community access to facilities.

- Two thirds of schools offered extended services as part of a cluster or group of schools and there was evidence that working in clusters helps to develop links with community organisations and avoids duplication of effort.
- Seven in ten schools were targeting specific groups of pupils or families for support with extended services. Most commonly this was economically disadvantaged families and pupils with disabilities or special educational needs. However there was still a participation gap (in terms of hours of activities taken up) between economically disadvantaged pupils and those from 'better off' families and this seemed to relate to the cost of activities.
- Two thirds of pupils had taken part in at least one term-time activity in the previous term – most commonly sporting activities that occurred straight after school – and a third had not taken part in any activities in the previous term.
- Respondents to the survey of schools (mostly head teachers) generally had very positive views about how the provision of extended services had benefited the school and its pupils.

Methods

This report looks at the findings from the first year of the evaluation. It draws on:

- A telephone survey of 1,500 schools, conducted in September to November 2009;
- A face to face survey of 2,253 parents and 1,307 pupils conducted in November 2009 to February 2010;
- A postal survey of 363 schools, conducted in January and February 2010, that collected information on the resources used to deliver extended services;
- Visits to schools involved in qualitative case studies.

Further research including more surveys, more visits to case study schools, a cost benefit analysis and impact assessment, is planned for later in this evaluation.

Results

Provision

Two thirds of schools were offering all five elements of the full core offer (childcare from 8am to 6pm; a varied menu of activities; parenting support; community access to facilities; and swift and easy access to specialist support), and the remaining third were offering some elements. With the exception of community access to school facilities, at least nine in ten schools were offering each of the elements of the core offer. Secondary schools were more likely than primary or special schools to be offering the full core offer.

Where schools were offering services on the school site, many were also signposting to services elsewhere suggesting pupils and their families had a choice of locations where they could take up extended services.

Almost all schools offered activities or childcare straight after school, but around eight in ten offered activities or childcare before school and in the holidays, and six in ten offered activities in the evenings after 6pm. On average, schools were offering 14 different activities each week during term time.

Three-quarters of schools or more offered family-wide activities, support for parents, and adult learning opportunities.

Two thirds of schools were opening at least one of their facilities for community access, most commonly halls, rooms or spaces, sports facilities, and playgrounds and play areas.

Almost all schools were working with disability or SEN support professionals, speech and language therapists, social care professionals, and parenting support professionals.

Almost all schools had consulted parents and pupils when planning extended services, and two-thirds had consulted the wider local community. Just over half of parents were aware of their child's school having consulted parents. Three quarters of pupils recalled being consulted about activities. Mostly by filling in a questionnaire or discussing activities in a class or tutor group.

Six in ten parents thought their child's school takes parents views on additional services into account at least 'a fair amount', but three in ten thought parents' views were not really taken into account. Around three quarters of pupils thought their school took their views on activities into account at least 'a fair amount', but a quarter thought their views were not really taken into account.

Seven in ten schools were targeting specific groups of pupils or families for support with extended services. Most commonly economically disadvantaged families and pupils with disabilities or SEN.

Delivery

Two thirds of schools offered extended services as part of a cluster or group of schools, with most clusters being made up of ten schools or less. Nine in ten schools were using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

The most common form of support schools were using to help plan, develop and deliver extended services was local authorities, including ESRAs (70 per cent of schools were using this as a form of support). Using other schools for support was also common (42 per cent of schools were doing this). Nearly two-thirds of schools agreed they had received sufficient support to help develop and deliver extended services effectively, but around two in ten disagreed.

Four in ten schools agreed they had adequate human resources and administration within the school for the extended services programme to be a success, but half of schools disagreed with this. Eight in ten schools agreed teachers in the school had been consulted about the development of extended services.

For all five elements of the core offer, the majority of schools had (some) day to day responsibility for running extended services themselves, but for activities and childcare it was also common for private providers to have responsibility for these, and local authorities tended to have (some) responsibility for the running of parenting support and swift and easy access. Health agencies or statutory agencies also tended to have (some) responsibility for running swift and easy access.

Schools tended to use a variety of sources of funding for extended services. School funding and public sector (LA or PCT) funding was widely used for all five elements of the core offer. In the majority of schools users paid for childcare, activities and community access, and many schools were reliant on staff and others volunteering in order to provide childcare and activities. Amongst schools that asked users to pay for childcare or activities, almost all offered some kind of support for families who struggle to pay.

A third of schools agreed they had adequate financial resources for the extended services programme to be a success, but a little over half disagreed. The most common barrier to developing and delivering extended services, cited by nearly two thirds of schools, related to the funding of services.

Nine in ten schools were using registers to monitor attendance at activities, and just under half of these were then feeding attendance information into a central database.

Usage

Few parents felt they knew a great deal about the kinds of additional services offered by their child's school, but over half felt at least reasonably well informed. More than nine in ten parents were aware of their child's school providing childcare or activities during term time, but only just under four in ten thought holiday activities were offered (although for 93 per cent of parents interviewed their child's school was providing holiday activities).

Three quarters of parents were aware of their child's school offering parental support services, four in ten parents thought their child's school opened its facilities for community access, and around four in ten recalled being given information by their child's school about how to access support services and professionals.

Two thirds of pupils had taken part in at least one term-time activity in the previous term – most commonly sporting activities that occurred straight after school – and a third had not taken part in any activities in the previous term. A significant minority of pupils (around three in ten) were doing at least two hours of activities a week during term time. Less than one pupil in ten had been to activities during school holidays in the last year. Where pupils had taken part in holiday activities they had participated in an average of 33 hours of activities across the year.

Around a third of parents had used parental support services (most commonly social events and information sessions). However, a much higher proportion of parents (eight in ten) said they would be likely to approach their child's school if they needed help accessing support services. Only 14 per cent of parents had used any school facilities that had been opened for community access.

Three in ten parents said their child had been helped by the school to access at least one type of support service or professional in the last year, but this was much more common in special schools (over eight in ten).

All schools had promoted their extended services, most commonly using methods such as newsletters, flyers, letters to parents, and postings on the school website or school notice boards.

Around two in ten parents were dissatisfied with the availability of childcare, adult learning and parenting support in their area, and around three in ten were dissatisfied with the availability of activities suitable for

their child, and leisure facilities in the area they live, suggesting there is a gap in local services that could be filled by extended services in and around schools.

The time when the highest proportion of parents (four in ten) said they would like more activities to be provided to cover their childcare needs was during the summer holidays. A third of parents would like information sessions related to their child's schooling to be made more available to them. Just over a third of parents said there were school facilities that were not open to the community that they would like to be able to use.

The majority of pupils would like their school to offer more activities before school, straight after school, and during school holidays.

Eight in ten parents were satisfied with the way staff handle discipline problems at activities, but fewer (two thirds) were satisfied with the amount of feedback they get about their child's progress at activities. Three quarters of pupils thought that the activities provided by their school were good overall, and around four in ten pupils thought their school was providing more activities than it had been a year ago.

Benefits of participation (as perceived by parents) were mostly benefits for their child (such as having fun and making new friends), but two in ten parents said their child attending activities allowed them to work.

Most parents (over six in ten) said their child could attend all or most of the activities they wanted them to. Where their child could not go to all of the activities they had wanted, the main barriers (each mentioned by around a quarter of parents) were: costs; not liking the activities on offer; issues with the availability of activities; and logistical issues such as time, location or transport to and from activities.

Most parents had positive views about their child's school, agreeing it has a good reputation, encourages their child to achieve, and involves them in issues that affect their child. Most parents also thought there was good interaction between parents and school staff. Seven in ten pupils said they enjoyed school at least most of the time, and pupils that took part in activities were more likely to say they enjoyed school.

Impact

Respondents to the survey of schools generally had very positive views on how extended services had helped the school to engage with pupils and families, but a third agreed that they still struggled to engage disadvantaged pupils and families in extended schools activities. Views were also generally positive on how extended services had helped schools to form or improve links with the community, with neighbouring schools, and with other agencies and providers of community services.

At least seven in ten schools had seen greater parent and pupil engagement in learning and greater pupil enjoyment of school as a result of extended services, but fewer schools had observed improvements in attendance or reductions in behaviour problems or exclusions. In two thirds of schools the development of extended services had had at least some influence in raising attainment. It is worth noting that these findings are based on the opinions of the individuals interviewed for the telephone survey of schools.

Despite all the positive views of schools, over six in ten schools agreed that offering extended services places a significant burden on schools.

Cluster working tends to have a positive effect in both making schools more likely to form or improve links with the community, with neighbouring schools, and with other agencies and providers of community services, and in reducing the burden of delivering extended services on individual schools.

Over half of pupils and parents thought their (child's) enjoyment of school in general had increased since they started participating in activities. Over half of pupils also thought their had been a positive impact on the marks they receive for their schoolwork, and more than half of parents thought their child's language communication and socialising skills had improved. Three quarters of pupils agreed that taking part in activities helped them to get along better with other pupils, and around a third agreed it helped them get along better with their family.

Most parents who used parental support services agreed these had had positive impacts on them: getting more involved with activities and events at school; talking more with parents of other pupils; talking to their child about school more; and helping their child to learn new things.

Costs

A cost benefit analysis is planned for later in the evaluation, but in the first year a postal survey of schools collected data on the resources schools used to deliver extended services. Costs will be attached to these resources in order to estimate the cost of delivering extended services. Case study interviews were also conducted with 10 schools to gain better understanding of the context in which extended services are delivered and the range of inputs used.

Both the case studies and the postal survey of schools showed there is considerable variety in the kinds of extended services schools offer, the ways in which they are delivered, and the scale of resources used to deliver them.

Quantitative data suggested:

- The equivalent of around half a full-time member of staff (18 hours a week) was needed for the administration and co-ordination of extended services;
- A similar number of hours (around 20 per week) were needed for the delivery of out of hours activities;
- Where schools offered holiday activities, a little over 300 hours of time per year were needed for the delivery of these;
- In total, the average number of hours per week used to deliver extended services was 133.

These hours are not necessarily delivered by school staff, some hours are provided by local authority staff, external providers, volunteers and others.

Longitudinal case studies

Twenty longitudinal case studies are being undertaken as part of the evaluation to help capture and explain the complexity and variability of what is happening 'on the ground' with extended services, and to contextualise findings from the quantitative elements of the evaluation. These case studies use the theory of

change to follow schools over time, exploring the outcomes anticipated from extended services, and the actions taken to generate those outcomes.

During the first year of the evaluation a series of fieldwork visits have been made to each school, and a theory of change has been developed for each. Visits to these schools will continue throughout the evaluation to explore further developments in extended services and measure outcomes and impacts. Because the first year of the evaluation has been about developing theories of change, 'findings' at this stage are necessarily limited. However, some emerging issues have been identified and are summarised below.

Schools, and particularly school leaders, are generally committed to the extended services agenda, and view it in a positive light, they also can articulate an understanding of their pupil's and communities' needs. However, extended services coordinators have reported that some teaching staff view the extended services agenda as an 'add-on' that is the responsibility of the coordinator alone.

The development of extended services has generally been on the foundation of some level of existing provision. For the most part, schools' initial efforts have been on delivering the core offer, and only once this is in place do they consider targeting particular groups, improving the quality of provision, and evaluating its effectiveness.

Many schools work in clusters which help develop links with community organisations and avoid duplication of effort. School leaders report that establishing a sound infrastructure and designating an appropriate lead person for extended services are critical.

Some schools have encountered difficulties when developing extended services, such as: being in new-build premises (meaning the school does not have control of those buildings at some times when they are needed); child protection requirements (vetting requirements make their attempts to engage parents and community members more difficult); in rural areas, issues with transport and with the geographical dispersion of specialist services, other agencies and external providers; and concerns about funding impacting on perceptions of the sustainability of extended services.

Additional Information

This research report was written before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

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