

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

POLICY: Stopping Building Schools for the Future (BSF) projects which have not reached financial closure.

Description of the policy

BSF was started in 2005 and aimed to renew the secondary school estate in England where needed by 2023. The Government aims to stop the programme because it has made insufficient progress and impact. BSF was supposed to have built 200 wholly new schools by the end of 2008; and had only rebuilt 35 and refurbished 13. BSF is seen to be over-complex bureaucratically and is over costly. The cost to each school for just participating in the early stages of the programme was equivalent to the cost of a whole newly qualified teacher. The cost of setting up the procurement bureaucracy before building could commence has been up to £10 million for each local area.

The decision to stop further development of the BSF programme does not mean the end of capital investment by the Department, but Ministers are clear that future spending needs to be more efficient and with a sharper focus on real needs. This government aims to review all capital programmes through the Capital Review which will report by the end of the year. The efficiencies being made now will ensure better targeting of future commitments on areas of greatest need.

Initial prioritisation of the BSF programme was on the relative average social and educational needs of the groups of schools proposed by authorities as projects. For the first six waves, which included schools which are completed, schools which are continuing, and schools which are stopped, GCSE results were used as proxy for educational need and eligibility for free school meals as proxy for social need. Initial prioritisation does not necessarily reflect the progress individual projects had made and therefore their inclusion in those stopped or not.

The evidence base

There is no evidence of the impact of the BSF programme as so far completed on factors affecting disability, ethnicity or gender. This is because of the relatively small number of schools opened and the time taken for impact to be made and evaluated.

This EQUIA therefore addresses the equality impacts of stopping the programme. The stoppage affects just over 700 school projects, including some brand new schools proposed to meet pupil place pressures for which there is of course no data. We have examined the disability, ethnicity and gender characteristics of the balance of 675 existing schools which have had projects stopped and compared them to the national average.

What the evidence shows – key facts

Table 1: Institution type of stopped BSF projects

	Stopped BSF	All		Stopped BSF	All
Community	275	1860		41%	40%
Foundation	129	717		19%	15%
Voluntary aided	95	545		14%	12%
Voluntary controlled	6	103		1%	2%
Special	129	985		19%	21%
Pupil Referral Unit	41	458		6%	10%
Total	675	4668		100%	100%

As a point of clarification, the 'all' totals in the table above refer to mainstream secondary schools with the exception of special schools and PRUs which can cover pupils of all ages. There are slightly more community, foundation and VA schools within the 'stopped' list than nationally.

Table 2: Religious Character of stopped BSF projects

	Religious character						Total
	Christian	Church of England	Roman Catholic	Muslim	Does Not Apply	None	
Foundation	-	1	1	-	121	6	129
Voluntary aided	1	24	63	2	-	5	95
Voluntary controlled	-	2	-	-	-	4	6

Table 3 - Pupil Characteristics of stopped BSF projects

Mainstream secondary

	Gender		FSM	EAL	Ethnicity						SEN
	Female	Male			White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese	Other	
Stopped BSF schools	50%	50%	17%	17%	76%	4%	11%	6%	0%	2%	24%
All maintained mainstream schools	50%	50%	13%	11%	82%	3%	8%	4%	0%	1%	21%

Special

	Gender		FSM	EAL	Ethnicity						SEN
	Female	Male			White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese	Other	
Stopped BSF schools	30%	73%	39%	12%	80%	3%	8%	6%	0%	1%	100%
All maintained special schools	29%	71%	32%	10%	82%	4%	7%	5%	0%	1%	100%

This table shows that the stopped BSF schools have higher rates of FSM and pupils with English as an additional language compared to all maintained schools - this is true for both mainstream and special schools. In addition, both mainstream and special schools have slightly higher rates of minority ethnic pupils compared to all schools nationally.

Data on disability is not available at school level. The number of pupils with special educational needs is readily available, and the figures above include all pupils with SEN (i.e. with **and** without statements). DfE routinely uses SEN as a proxy for disability as there is very considerable overlap. Children with SEN are over-represented in the stopped BSF schools.

PRUs have been excluded from the pupil characteristic analysis because there are no national figures available to provide a comparison. However, we know that learners with SEN, and learners from some minority ethnic communities, are heavily over-represented in exclusions. Thus it is likely that they are also over-represented in the PRU population.

We have also looked at whether any of these differences are statistically significant, with the following mainly positive results:

	<i>Mainstream Stopped Schools- Significant?</i>	<i>Special Stopped Schools Significant?</i>
Female	NO	NO
Male	NO	YES
FSM	YES	YES
EAL	YES	YES
White	YES	YES
Mixed	YES	NO
Asian	YES	NO
Black	YES	NO
Chinese		
Other	YES	NO
SEN	YES	NO

The figures quoted for all maintained mainstream and special schools are taken from SFR08/2009 DCSF: Schools, Pupils and Their Characteristics: January 2009 and 2009 census data has been used for the BSF schools so that both sets of data are comparable.

Challenges and opportunities

It is clear from the data above that the stoppage of these school projects has inadvertently impacted slightly more on children who can be seen to be disadvantaged in terms of social deprivation, and as having English as an additional language compared to national averages; and also as having slightly higher rates of minority ethnic pupils and on learners with SEN compared to national averages.

However, the proportion of special schools and of Pupil Referral Units in the sample is below the national average.

Stopping these particular schools' projects under BSF does not mean that they will never receive any capital investment. The autumn Comprehensive Spending Review Settlement, informed by the outcome of the review of departmental capital, gives the opportunity to consider how the schools in the stopped projects can benefit from future capital investment, and to reflect the equality agenda in future departmental capital programmes.

Equality impact assessment

Adverse impact in the short term is possible. This is an indirect consequence of stopping the projects in order to achieve greater value for money and to improve targeting of funding to need. Prioritisation of the programme favoured educational and social deprivation, a stop now therefore means that these prioritised groups will be inadvertently disadvantaged disproportionately, in as much as there is correlation between the demographic of the stopped schools and with relatively high proportions of disabled learners and those from minority ethnic communities.

Remedial action will therefore be considered, though as all funding is currently committed for 2010-11, this will be for the next spending review period. The review of capital expenditure is considering how to allocate capital in a fairer way in the future, concentrating on need as well as the condition of buildings.

Next steps

On 5 July the Secretary of State announced a review of all areas of the Department for Education's capital spending. Its purpose is to ensure that future capital investment represents good value for money and enables us to build more for less. It will also include consideration of all pressures including those for places in special schools, and supporting other departmental initiatives including improving attainment and life chances for all children and reducing the gap between the worst and best performing.

Therefore, stopping these projects now does not mean that these schools will not in time receive investment: the government is committed to continuing to invest in schools.

This impact assessment will be brought to the attention of the review.