
EVALUATION OF THE FULL SERVICE EXTENDED SCHOOLS INITIATIVE: FINAL REPORT

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The full service extended schools initiative

This report presents the findings of the national evaluation of full service extended schools (FSES), part of the Government's overall vision for all schools to offer a core set of extended activities by 2010. The FSES initiative sought to support the development in every local authority (LA) area of one or more schools which provide a comprehensive range of services on a single site, including access to health services, adult learning and community activities, as well as study support and 8am to 6pm wrap-around childcare.

Key findings

- FSESs were characterised by considerable diversity as schools charted their own directions. However, most FSESs developed additional provision to overcome pupils' 'barriers to learning', which were seen as related to family and community problems.
- The FSES initiative was broadly welcomed by schools. Promising partnership arrangements, genuine pupil and community involvement, and strategic initiatives at local level were emerging, but in some places sustainability and partnership working were a problem.
- FSESs were impacting positively on the attainment of their pupils - particularly those facing difficulties. They were also having a range of other impacts on outcomes for pupils, including engagement with learning, family stability and enhanced life chances.
- FSESs were generating positive outcomes for families and local people, particularly those facing difficulties. Positive impacts were also evident in relation to local communities as a whole, though these were weaker.
- FSESs typically experienced improved school performance, better relations with local communities and an enhanced standing of the school in its area.
- FSESs brought different strands of extended provision together into a coherent FSES 'approach'. There was evidence that this led to outcomes over and above those which the individual activities might have generated in isolation.
- FSES approaches were usually shaped by the views of school leaders about what was needed, and by the energies of school leaders in driving development and seeking funding. However, there were cases where schools worked within a clear area strategy and where decision making was shared with partners from beyond the school (including local people). This could lead to greater stability of resourcing.
- The success of FSESs bodes well for the roll out of the extended schools approach nationally. Their experience underlines the importance of clear thinking about the nature and purposes of that approach. This needs to take place in the context of a coherent and stable policy context at national level, and the development of strategic frameworks at local level.

Background

This summary presents findings from the evaluation of full service extended schools (FSES), part of the Government's overall vision for all schools to offer a core set of extended activities by 2010. The FSES initiative sought initially to support the development in every local authority area of one or more schools which provide a comprehensive range of services on a single site, including access to health services, adult learning and community activities, as well as study support and 8am to 6pm wrap-around childcare. The initiative introduced a particular emphasis on the co-location of services provided by other, non-educational agencies.

The FSES initiative was launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2003. Local FSES projects received funding from DfES, and came on stream in each of three successive years. In the first year, 61 projects were funded at between £93,000 and £162,000 per annum, decreasing annually for a further two years. Most FSESs served areas of disadvantage and in the first year were located in Behaviour Improvement Programme areas. By the end of the initiative, 138 schools were involved, together with a further 10 funded through the London Challenge.

Evaluation aims and methods

The evaluation of FSESs took place over the three years for which the initiative was funded. It aimed to:

- identify and characterise the activities undertaken by participating schools;
- identify the processes underpinning these activities;
- identify the impacts of activities; and
- identify the outcomes of activities.

A multi-strand approach was adopted over the three years of the initiative. The main components of this were: detailed case studies of 17 projects; a statistical analysis of the National Pupil Database; a cost benefit analysis of FSES provision in a sample of 10 projects; brief case studies of comparator schools not participating in the FSES initiative; a questionnaire survey of pupils, parents and staff in case study FSESs and their comparators, repeated across two years; and a final questionnaire survey of all FSESs.

The report presents findings from the final year of the evaluation and draws on these and on the work of the previous two years to reach overall conclusions about the initiative. Earlier findings are available on-line at:

www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR680.pdf (year 1), and
www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR795.pdf (year 2).

Findings

How FSESs developed

FSESs were different from each other in terms of the priorities they set themselves and the range of activities they undertook. However, beneath this diversity, they shared common features:

- a focus on overcoming pupils' 'barriers to learning';
- a recognition that these were related to what were seen as family and community problems;
- the development of additional provision to overcome these barriers;
- the deployment of additional staff and the formation of partnerships to deliver this provision;
- the manipulation of multiple funding streams to support provision; and
- a tendency for schools to go their own way in pursuing their aims.

The FSES initiative was broadly welcomed by schools. In the first two years of the evaluation, schools were concerned about how they could make their provision sustainable, and about how to work in partnership with other agencies. These continued to be concerns in some places. However, enough FSESs had found ways round these difficulties to suggest that they could be overcome. Some FSESs had developed ways of involving pupils and community members in decision making. In some places, the work of FSESs was set in the context of local strategic initiatives which offered support to the schools and seemed likely to multiply their impacts.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the development of FSES approaches tended to rely heavily on the dynamism of head teachers and other school leaders, and to

be conceptualised in terms of what they saw as priorities. Often, school leaders took a view as to what lay in the best interests of pupils, families and communities, and then energetically sought the funding and partnerships that would enable them to make appropriate provision. However, there were examples which point to a way of leading the FSES approach that relies less on this kind of entrepreneurship at the school level. In these cases, the initiative of individual schools was set within the supportive framework of a clear area strategy, the involvement of partners from beyond the school (including local people) in decision-making, and a stable resourcing regime.

Outcomes from FSESs

There was clear evidence in the case study schools that the FSES approach was impacting positively on pupils' attainments. The analysis of NPD and responses to the questionnaire surveys indicated that similar impacts were happening in other FSESs. These impacts were clearest in the case of pupils facing difficulties. FSESs were having a range of other impacts on outcomes for pupils, including engagement with learning, family stability and enhanced life chances. In the case of children facing difficulties, these outcomes were often closely related and might be dramatic. There were also positive impacts on many other pupils, though these were less marked.

FSESs were also generating positive outcomes for families and local people. Again, these were strongest where people were facing difficulties. There was also evidence of some impacts across wider groups of local people, though these were weaker. Large-scale effects on whole communities were not evident. There were indications that such effects might be possible in future. However, this would require FSESs to be able to work over time in a stable local context which supported their work.

The cost benefit analysis suggested that both the costs and benefits of FSES approaches were high. However, since benefits balanced or outweighed costs, and since they accrued particularly to children and families facing the greatest difficulties, FSES approaches represented a good investment.

There was no evidence that FSES status damaged schools' performance. On the contrary, FSESs

often found that their performance on indicators such as pupil test and examination results, attendance, and exclusions improved as they developed their extended provision. However, positive outcomes for individual pupils in difficulty, did not always make an obvious difference to indicators that measure school performance at an aggregate level. In any case, FSESs were usually aiming at a range of outcomes for pupils that could not all be captured by those indicators. Likewise, there was no evidence that FSES status damaged schools' reputations. On the contrary schools commonly experienced better relations with local communities and an enhanced standing of the school in its area. However, it is likely that the FSES approach was one of a number of factors that were contributing to enhanced school performance and status. Moreover, the FSES approach alone was not enough to 'bomb-proof' schools against serious problems they might encounter in other aspects of their work.

Participation in the initiative enabled schools to establish or develop further their FSES approaches. However, many schools outside the initiative have similar approaches. There are also many schools which offer some more limited aspects of extended provision. There is reason to believe that all of these schools can produce positive outcomes. However, there was evidence that bringing different aspects of provision together into a coherent FSES approach generated additional outcomes. This was because different aspects of provision supported each other and could be brought to bear on the complex difficulties experienced by some children and adults.

Implications for the future

The experience of FSESs suggests that attempts to develop similar approaches in future are well worthwhile. If these attempts are to be successful, however, they need:

- *Policy coherence and stability at national level.* Schools need to be able to develop their approaches within a stable framework over relatively lengthy periods of time.
- *Strategic frameworks at local level.* Rather than working autonomously, schools need to work within local strategies so that their work can be supported more effectively by other

organisations and agencies tackling similar issues.

- *Clear conceptualisations of the nature and purposes of FSES approaches.* Promising as these approaches are, their aims and purposes are understood differently in different places. There is therefore need for a debate at national, local and school level to develop some consensus on these issues.

Although FSESs are different in important respects from extended schools, they offer some lessons for the national roll out. In particular, the experience of FSESs:

- indicates the potential of extended schools for making a difference to children, families and communities;
- suggests that this potential might be realised best within the context of local strategic approaches;
- underlines the importance of identifying coordinators at school level, of building the commitment of school leaders, and - in view of the time taken to establish partnerships and a stable base of provision - of maintaining support over the medium as well as the short term;
- suggests that leaders of extended schools at school and local level should be given opportunities to think through some fundamental issues as well as more practical concerns - how extended provision relates to the core business of the school, what the aims and purposes of extended schools should be, and who should be involved in making decisions about this.

Additional Information

Copies of the full report (RR852) - priced £4.95 - are available by writing to DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ.

Cheques should be made payable to "DfES Priced Publications".

Copies of this Research Brief (RB852) are available free of charge from the above address (tel: 0845 60 222 60). Research Briefs and Research Reports can also be accessed at www.dfes.gov.uk/research/ Further information about this research can be obtained from Samantha Mason, DfES, 2A Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA.

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

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