

The National Evaluation of full Service extended schools

The full service extended schools (FSES) initiative was launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2003. The original aim was to support the development in every local authority area of one or more schools which provide a comprehensive range of services, including access to health services, adult learning and community activities as well as study support and 8am to 6pm childcare. Local FSES projects received funding from DfES, and came on stream in each of three successive 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.

The evaluation aimed to identify:

- the activities undertaken by participating schools;
- the processes underpinning these activities;
- the impacts of activities; and
- 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 (NPD); 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 study found that:

- The FSES initiative was broadly welcomed by schools.
- The FSES approach was impacting positively on pupils' attainments in case study schools. 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.
- FSESs were also generating positive outcomes for families and local people, particularly where they were facing difficulties.
- 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.
- The FSES approach was commonly associated with improved school performance, better relations with local communities and an enhanced standing of the school in its area.
- The experience of FSESs suggests that attempts to develop similar approaches in future might be helped by:
 - policy coherence and stability, enabling schools to develop over longer periods of time;
 - clear conceptualisations emerging from a debate about the nature and purposes of FSES approaches; and
 - strategic frameworks developed at local level in order to link the efforts of schools with those of other organisations and agencies tackling similar issues.

The study has produced three reports:

Cummings, C., Dyson, A., Papps, I., Pearson, D., Raffo, C. & Todd, L. (2005) *Evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools Initiative: End of first year report* (London, DfES), available on-line at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR680.pdf>.

Cummings, C., Dyson, A., Papps, I., Pearson, D., Raffo, C., Tiplady, L. & Todd, L. (2006) *Evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools Initiative, Second Year: Thematic papers* (London, DfES), available on-line at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR795.pdf>.

Cummings, C., Dyson, A., Muijs, D., Papps, I., Pearson, D., Raffo, C., Tiplady, L., Todd, L. & with Crowther, D. (2007) *Evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools Initiative: Final report* (London, DfES). available on-line at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR852.pdf>.