

# Beyond School

Why we need a new approach  
to school enrichment



Francesca Fraser

Edited by Adam Hawksbee

**ONWARD**➤

# About Onward

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We do this by developing practical policies that work. Our team has worked both at a high level in government and for successful thinktanks. We know how to produce big ideas that resonate with policymakers, the media and the public. We work closely with policymakers of all parties to build coalitions of support. Most importantly, we engage ordinary people across the country and work with them to make our ideas a reality.

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## Thanks

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# Summary of the argument





Schools are not just a vehicle to pass exams. At their best they build relationships, character and aspiration for young people from all backgrounds. They are the greatest tool we have to promote social mobility. And we need them to be better.

Today, too many young people leave school unprepared for their next step, especially disadvantaged pupils who need support the most. Over a third of pupils finish primary school having failed to reach the expected standard in reading, writing and maths. The disadvantage gap has scarcely closed in over a decade, and England has more 19 year olds with low basic skills in numeracy and literacy than much of the OECD. And this underperformance applies to more than just academics. Successive surveys show that school leavers lack the cultural capital, soft skills and awareness needed to succeed in the workplace. When left unaddressed, socioeconomic inequalities deepen. Ministers need to be using schools to put this right.

Ministers have started to tackle these problems, spurred on by lost learning during the pandemic. The new National Tutoring Plan is delivering tailored tuition to millions of children around the country. The Youth Investment Fund and National Plan for Music are starting to boost local capacity to nourish young people's lives. But too much of this is happening at the fringes of children's lives and not in the place where they spend the vast majority of their time: school.

School enrichment offers an untapped opportunity, with evidence growing that a structured programme can benefit both the academic progress and soft skills of students. The Education Endowment Foundation finds enrichment can lead to up to 3 months additional progress across English, Maths and Science. A Government review found that underachieving pupils participating in extracurricular activities like sport increased their numeracy skills by almost a third.

On soft skills, the OECD have demonstrated that hands-on learning and extracurricular activities help children improve their ability to work in a team, sense of responsibility and self-confidence. Interventions in England have corroborated these findings. The Essential Life Skills programme carried out in Opportunity Areas in 2018 and 2019 found that 78% of providers felt young people were more confident, 55% thought they had improved team working skills, and 45% thought they were more resilient. The 2003-10 Extended Services in Schools programme piloted a longer school day alongside parental support and a 'varied menu of activities', and found 74% of schools saw greater pupil engagement in learning and 54% saw reduced discipline problems. The positive effects were greatest in schools with the highest numbers of disadvantaged pupils.

Despite the well-evidenced benefits of enrichment, it is often left to those who can afford it. This reinforces inequalities: children from wealthier families are able to explore their passions and build their skills, while disadvantaged children are left relying on the often limited provision their school is able to provide:

- Almost half (45%) of young people in the wealthiest decile attend youth clubs, scouts or girl guides weekly, compared to a quarter (26%) of the most deprived decile. Young people in the wealthiest decile are also three times more likely to sing in a choir or play in a band or orchestra weekly. Roughly one in seven of those in the least deprived report doing so, compared to one in 20 of those who are most deprived. Meanwhile just over 50% of young people in the wealthiest decile play a musical instrument, compared to under a third of those in the most deprived decile.
- Young people from more deprived backgrounds are also much less likely to be physically active, particularly outside school. 45% of children aged 7-11 from wealthier families do more than 30 minutes physical activity per day in school compared to 34% of children from more deprived families. But outside of school is where the difference is most stark. Almost two thirds (65%) of children from high affluence families do more than 30 minutes activity outside of school while only 46% of those from low affluence families do.
- Activity levels carry through to wellbeing and self belief. Children from lower affluence families, who tend to do less physical activity, report lower life satisfaction and confidence in their own abilities. When 7 to 11 year olds were asked to make a judgement out of 10 for how worthwhile their life is, those from lower affluence families who participate in 60 minutes or more activity per day gave the average score of 6.23 compared to 5.71 for those that do less than 30 minutes of activity.
- Children growing up in the North are granted fewer opportunities. Young people in the South East are twice as likely to say they play music outside of school than young people in the North East, and 40% more likely to do dance. Almost 5 in 10 young people in London say they play a musical instrument, compared to 3 in 10 in the North East.

So why aren't schools realising these benefits, and offering more enrichment? We find three key challenges.

1. The most significant barrier that schools face is capacity - it costs money to put on a broad and structured programme of enrichment. Teachers need to be paid and equipment needs to be bought. But budgets are already stretched, and some schools are already using Pupil Premium funding to fill holes in their financial plans. Some education leaders report cutting what extracurricular activities they already offer just to cover teacher salaries.

2. The second challenge is timing. Schools that offer the most enrichment almost always rely on a longer school day. But teachers already work overly long hours, contributing to a retention problem. Adding time onto the school day usually requires limiting teacher workload elsewhere or finding alternative individuals to deliver the enrichment.
3. The third challenge is making sure enrichment reaches the most disadvantaged. If schools invest time and effort into enrichment, they want to know it will have an impact. But disadvantaged children are harder to engage, because they face more challenges in their home life and do not always have the necessary support in place to participate.

Ministers therefore need to set out a plan to enable every school to provide a broad and structured programme of enrichment for their pupils. It is necessary that schools are the centre-piece of this and the school day should be lengthened as a result, but every effort should be made to avoid additional workload on teachers.

To address capacity, the Government should introduce a new enrichment premium designed to facilitate and support schools to build a programme of enrichment. To ensure value for money, this should be accompanied by clear guidance on its purpose - to enable schools to build partnerships with charities and local businesses in their community - rather than to simply pay teachers to spend additional time in school. We recommend that this money is paid into an account that can either go directly to local partners or be drawn down into the schools' budget, but with clear reporting arrangements that must be declared in advance of the money being spent.

To address timing, we recommend Ministers create new guidance encouraging schools to add an additional two hours to their school timetable to support enrichment after school. This should be accompanied with proactive policies to reduce teacher workload by learning from best practice. For example, using technology to reduce time spent marking or moving teacher training online so that teachers can better fit it around their schedule. To support the efforts, Government should create a new call for an army of volunteers, encouraging parents to support after-school enrichment. Ministers should work proactively with local authorities to ensure free transport provision reflects the extended timetables in school.

Lastly, to make sure that all pupils but particularly the most disadvantaged are able to benefit, Ministers should set out new advice on how schools can open their schools longer rather than relying on children travelling to an alternative location. This should include actively working with schools to overcome the barriers in place, like prohibitive PFI contracts, and encouraging schools to work with local community organisations, sports associations or charities to share their school grounds in the evenings.

# Table of recommendations


Problem	Solution
<b>Capacity</b>  School budgets are stretched. Rising inflation, higher energy bills and teacher salaries leave little resources to dedicate to enrichment activities. Where additional funding is provided it is often used to fill existing holes in school budgets rather than for the desired purpose.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Create a new enrichment premium for every primary and secondary pupil, focused tightly on partnerships with local charities and businesses.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 Introduce a strengthened accountability model for the enrichment premium requiring schools to declare how they will spend the funds in advance of drawing them into their accounts.</li></ol></li></ol>
<b>Timing</b>  Enrichment is most effective when it is fully timetabled as an additional lesson in the school day. But teachers are already working long hours, especially outside of lesson time. Any attempt to lengthen the school day cannot happen without addressing workforce constraints.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. Publish new guidance recommending all schools add 2 hours to their school week for enrichment. This should include best-practice in how to reduce teacher workload, with an enhanced role for School Resource Managers to identify time savings.</li><li>3. Issue a call for a new 'army of volunteers' using parents and local volunteers who want to support children in their community.</li></ol>
<b>Targeting</b>  Take up of after school activities is typically lower among children from poorer families, due to both logistical constraints and constrained parental support.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Encourage schools to open their school grounds for longer to facilitate enrichment and enable the community to use their facilities.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.1 Support schools to create dual entry systems to allow access from members of the public, including by helping to negotiate PFI contracts.</li></ol></li><li>5. Give local authorities a duty to make sure free and safe transport is available in response to the school's amended timetable.</li></ol>



# Must do better

Our school system is  
underperforming





Education reform has been one of the defining achievements of the last twelve years of Conservative government. It was motivated by a simple concept: that England's schools can be better.<sup>1</sup> The Coalition Government was unsatisfied with middling results in international league tables. So they trained better teachers with more autonomy and strengthened accountability, reformed the curriculum to focus on knowledge and academic rigour, and established new free schools to give parents choice and drive up performance. Since then England has climbed international PISA rankings. But the maxim remains, England's schools can be better.

Too many pupils are underperforming in numeracy and literacy, from primary school all the way through to finishing school at 18. While overall performance has improved, as international comparisons demonstrate, the disadvantage gap has not. And upon leaving school, employers are frustrated at young people ill-equipped to enter the workforce. Businesses report that young people lack the interpersonal skills and cultural capital needed to integrate with wider groups, and that this is particularly true for children from poorer backgrounds. These disparities are born out of the school gates, but there is a unique opportunity within the school to address them.

This chapter looks in more detail at these problems, before the report turns to how enrichment is uniquely placed to fix them.

## Numeracy and Literacy

Too many pupils finish primary school behind where they should be academically. In 2019 over two thirds (35%) of pupils left primary school failing to meet the expected standard in reading, writing and maths. Of those who are eligible for free school meals, 53% did not reach the expected standard, compared to 32% of pupils not eligible - meaning the majority of disadvantaged students were not where they needed to be academically when they entered secondary school.<sup>2</sup>

And the pandemic appears to have made this problem worse. The 2021/22 Key Stage 2 data shows 41%, or 2 in every 5 pupils, were failing to meet the expected standard. This is not surprising: the Education Endowment Foundation found that Year 1 pupils were on average three months behind in reading by summer 2021 compared to autumn 2020, and Year 2 students were an average of two months behind. More recently University College London and Sutton Trust have found 37% of 16 to 17 year olds in state schools feel they have fallen behind their classmates and half say they are less motivated to learn as a result of the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

Getting attainment back to where it was, and then improving it, is a significant challenge for policymakers. There is mixed evidence on how successful previous

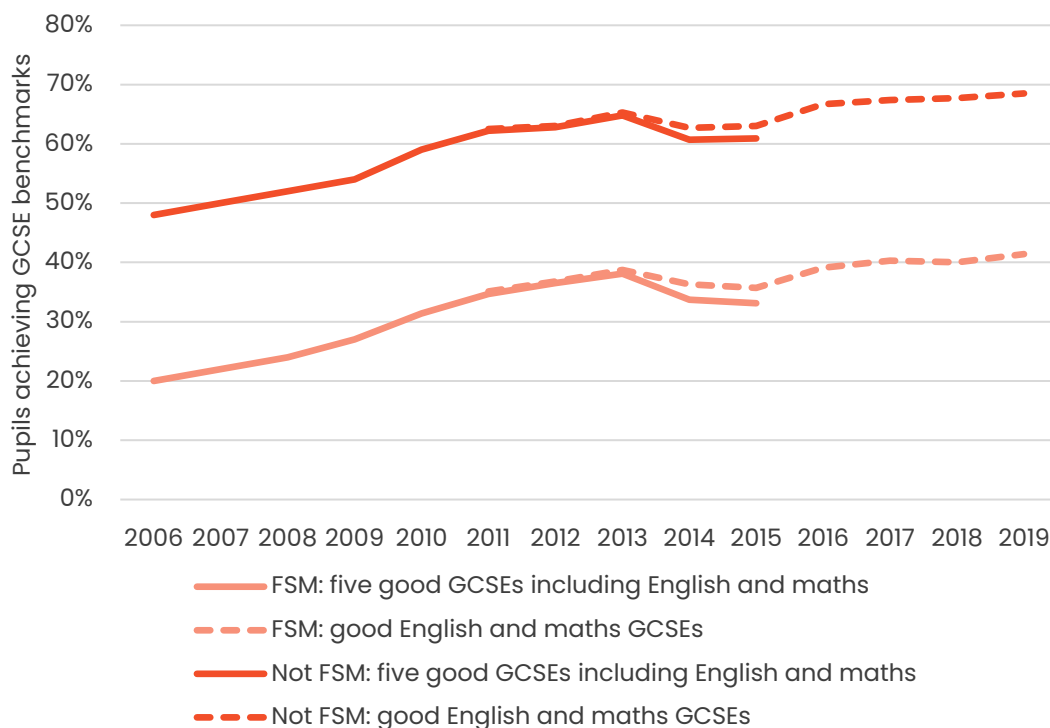
academic interventions have been in improving literacy and numeracy, especially for the most disadvantaged groups.

The Government’s own disadvantage attainment gap index suggests some progress has been made. This measure creates a mean rank for all disadvantaged pupils and a mean rank of pupils who are not disadvantaged and then calculates the difference between the two.<sup>4</sup> By this measure the difference in performance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at the end of primary school sat at 2.89 in 2019, which has been steadily falling since 2011 when the gap was 3.34.<sup>5</sup> At GCSE level, the gap has remained stable for some time. In 2011 it was 4.07, then fell to 3.74 in 2014 and as of 2019 was 3.70.<sup>6</sup> At the end of primary and secondary school, this measure suggests that children from more disadvantaged backgrounds are catching up.

But the Institute for Fiscal Studies argues that education inequalities have hardly fallen at all over two decades. They look at GCSE outcomes rather than overall rank, and show the difference between the share of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils who get good GCSE grades (grade 9 to 4) including in English and Maths has sat at roughly 27% since as far back as 2006. In 2019, this meant 69% of those who were not eligible for free school meals achieved at least grade 4 in English and maths, compared to just 41% of those on free school meals. This suggests that even as the total share of pupils gaining good GCSE grades has increased, this has done little to close the pre-existing gaps between those who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not.

**Figure 1: GCSE performance by free school meals eligibility**

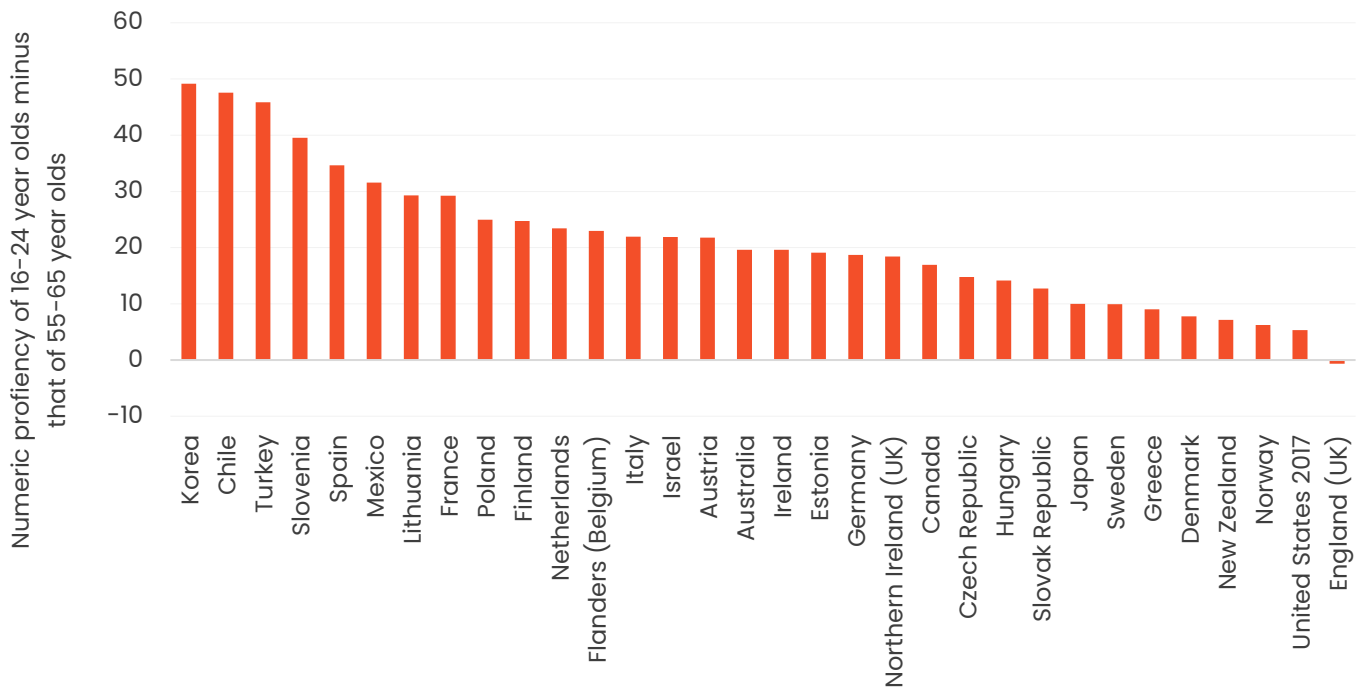
Source: IFS, *Education Inequalities*



International comparisons confirm that we are underperforming in numeracy and literacy, despite improvements over the last decade. In the majority of developed countries 16 to 24 year olds are more proficient in numeracy and literacy than 55 to 65 year olds. This is both because the younger group has been in a learning environment much more recently and, most importantly, standards of teaching should improve over time. But in England proficiency is almost exactly the same across numeracy and literacy between these two cohorts, and we lag behind other countries as a result. In 2019, when measuring numeracy proficiency among 16 to 19 year olds, England had the fourth lowest mean score in the OECD after Mexico, Chile and Turkey. As of 2012, England had three times the number of students aged 16 to 19 with low skills in numeracy and literacy compared to the highest performing countries like Finland, Japan, Korea and the Netherlands. At graduate level, one in 10 university graduates in England had numeracy and literacy skills below level two equivalent to above a C grade at GCSE. <sup>7</sup>

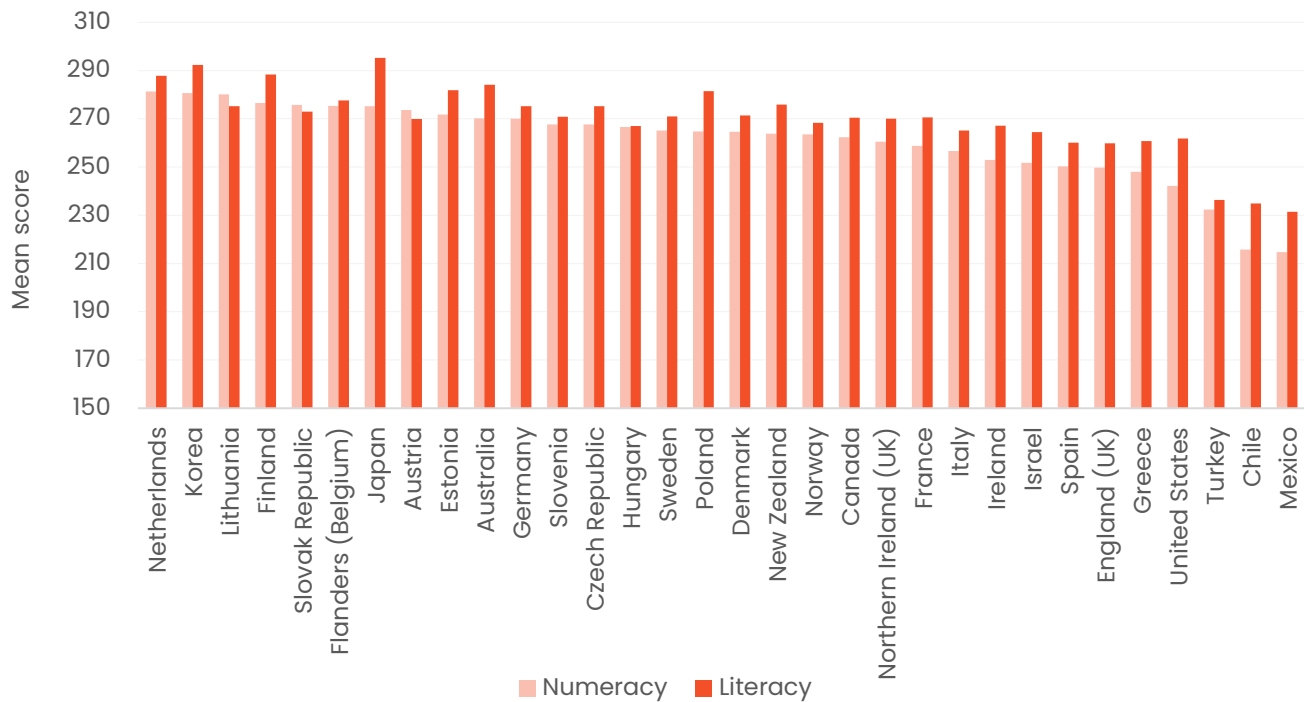
**Figure 2: Difference in numeracy proficiency by age group**

Source: Survey of Adult Skills – PIAAC, OECD<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 3: Low basic skills among 16 to 19 year olds, international comparison**

Source: OECD, Survey of Adult Skills



## Cultural Capital

Employers face an additional challenge: young people lacking the “cultural capital” that helps them to perform and progress in a professional environment. This concept, originating from the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, refers to the knowledge, skills, mannerisms and interests which are needed to “promote social mobility within a stratified society”.<sup>9</sup> This is often discussed in the context of lacking soft skills: confidence, teamwork, communication and the ability to build relationships.

Surveys of employers evidence their frustrations. The CBI reports two in five of its members feel school leavers are not ‘work ready’ when they enter the workplace, citing dissatisfaction with their wider character, behaviours and attributes. One third of employers feel young people do not have sufficient work experience when they enter the workplace for a permanent role.<sup>10</sup>

Sutton Trust polling has identified similar concerns, reporting businesses value these softer skills and feel that they are lacking among school leavers. It found 94% of employers feel life skills are as or more important than academic qualifications. In particular, employers felt communication and motivation were particularly important (at 78% each), higher than the number of employers who felt language or numeracy skills were important, at 71% and 68% respectively.<sup>11</sup> Of those young

people whose highest level of qualification is A Levels, almost 70% of employers felt these young people did not have the required life skills for the workplace. This figure falls for young people who attend university, with around 40% of employers feeling that young people are ill prepared. By comparison, fewer than a quarter feel the same about those who have completed an apprenticeship.<sup>12</sup>

This demand for soft skills is also visible when considering what employers look for when hiring. A report from Cardiff University that analysed 21 million job adverts found that employers consistently rated soft skills and ‘job readiness’ as more important than academic credentials. In particular, employers look for communication, planning and customer service skills most frequently.<sup>13</sup> While the work of Daisy Christodoulou and others has convincingly pushed back on the suggestion that it is possible to focus on teaching skills like communication over domain knowledge, this does not mean educators are helpless to build some of the softer skills that young people must acquire, something we will explore in the following chapter.

The lack of cultural capital is particularly acute among those from poorer backgrounds who tend to have fewer opportunities to develop soft skills through their home life.<sup>14</sup> The academics Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison talk in their book “The Class Ceiling” of the embodied cultural capital that allows individuals to critique a television programme or have the ‘gravitas’ to entertain clients.<sup>15</sup> They point to instances where applicants from a higher class background will win out over those from a lower class background because they are seen by employers as a “better fit”. The ONS has reached similar conclusions. Through an analysis of PAYE data they found that disadvantaged pupils went on to earn less than those who were not disadvantaged even when they held the same qualifications. They conclude this is as a result of their soft skills, such as confidence and networking, and their knowledge of the labour market.<sup>16</sup>

This highlights the importance of passing on cultural capital and soft skills from an early age, as is now recognised in the Ofsted inspection framework. It is something that employers repeatedly report shortages of among school leavers, and is a vital contributor to social mobility.

# Case for change

The importance of school  
enrichment





There has been extensive discussion about how ministers should respond to these challenges, further intensified by the impact of school closures on young people's academic and personal development. In February 2021, Sir Kevan Collins was appointed Education Recovery Commissioner and charged with designing a plan to prevent two years of education disruption leading to a generation of children underserved by their education. However he resigned only a few months later after the Government refused to commit to the “landmark investment” he said was necessary.

#### **Box 1: Sir Kevan Collins's plans**

Sir Kevan Collins put forward plans reported to cost £15 million to improve the quality of teaching, expand the tutoring available for pupils and extend the amount of time children spend in school via a longer school day.

He envisaged extending the school day by half an hour for three years, starting with a trial in a number of academies which could then be scaled up. He said it should allow time for tutoring and enrichment and “should offer children opportunities to re-engage with sport, music and the rich range of activities that define a great education.” The understanding was this extension would add 100 hours to the school year and teachers would be paid extra to deliver it, possibly at great expense. Sir Kevan wanted to support the roll out of this scheme by seeking more data on the impact of the length of school days.

Other elements of his plan included funding for additional training for early years practitioners and teachers. Where sixth form students' learning had been severely disrupted he put forward plans for an extra year to enable students to retake their A levels. It was suggested the tuition fund for 16 to 19 year olds could be expanded with a focus on subjects like English and maths.

Despite the fall-out from Sir Kevan Collins' resignation, the Government has gone some way to deliver on his plans. A total of £4.9 billion was allocated for education recovery up to 2024/25 in the Autumn Budget. This included the Recovery Premium for primary and secondary schools and additional funding to allow longer teaching for 16 to 19 year olds. The National Tutoring programme, following a difficult start, was allocated £1 billion to deliver six million tutoring courses with a focus on disadvantaged students.<sup>17</sup>

The Government has also invested in creating more opportunities outside of school for young people. The Youth Investment Fund, made up of £288 million in capital and up to £80 million in revenue grants, is funding 300 youth facilities to improve physical and mental health and build skills for work. This June the Government also announced their National Plan for Music, supplying funding for schools to buy



200,000 instruments and £79 million a year until 2025 for Music Hubs. These hubs pool together music charities and community groups to help state schools deliver music teaching.<sup>18</sup>

Ministers' have published stretching targets, setting the mission to get 90% of primary pupils to the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by 2030 and an aim to get the national average GCSE grade for English language and maths from 4.5 in 2019 to 5 by 2030. But to put children everywhere on the front foot, their ambition needs to extend further.

## The case for enrichment

A greater role for after-school enrichment provides a promising answer to the twin challenges of low academic achievement and weak cultural capital, particularly among the most disadvantaged students. Plans should be much more ambitious than the target set out in the Schools White Paper to bring all schools to teaching an average of 32.5 hours a week. This is the right policy, but is a correction to what schools should already be doing rather than an ambitious proposal for the future.

There are three major benefits to investing in school enrichment. First, there is strong evidence to suggest that it improves academic outcomes. Second, it can help pass on cultural capital including soft skills like teamwork and communication. Third, the cost of enrichment outside schools means without intervention existing inequalities will deepen.

### Impact on academic outcomes

A score of educational charities have demonstrated enrichment improves academic outcomes. An Education Endowment Foundation assessment of 80 studies finds that when primary and secondary school pupils engage in the arts - dance, drama, music, painting or sculpture - this can lead to up to 3 months academic progress across English, maths and science.<sup>19</sup> The impact can be highest for writing and mathematics. They argue that the arts can particularly help to re-engage older pupils in their learning which has positive effects on their wider academic performance. The Education Policy Institute has also endorsed greater school enrichment, through a longer school day, due to its evidenced benefits to academic performance.<sup>20</sup>

International examples further demonstrate the link between enrichment and academic performance. A review of evidence commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport looked at the impact of enrichment across 12 studies in North America and Israel. It found that young people who participate in organised sport increased their numeracy scores by 8%, and this is true when holding constant other determinants like prior attainment. The effect was even greater among

underachieving pupils, who increased their numeracy skills by an average of 29% compared to those that did not participate in extracurricular sport.<sup>21</sup>

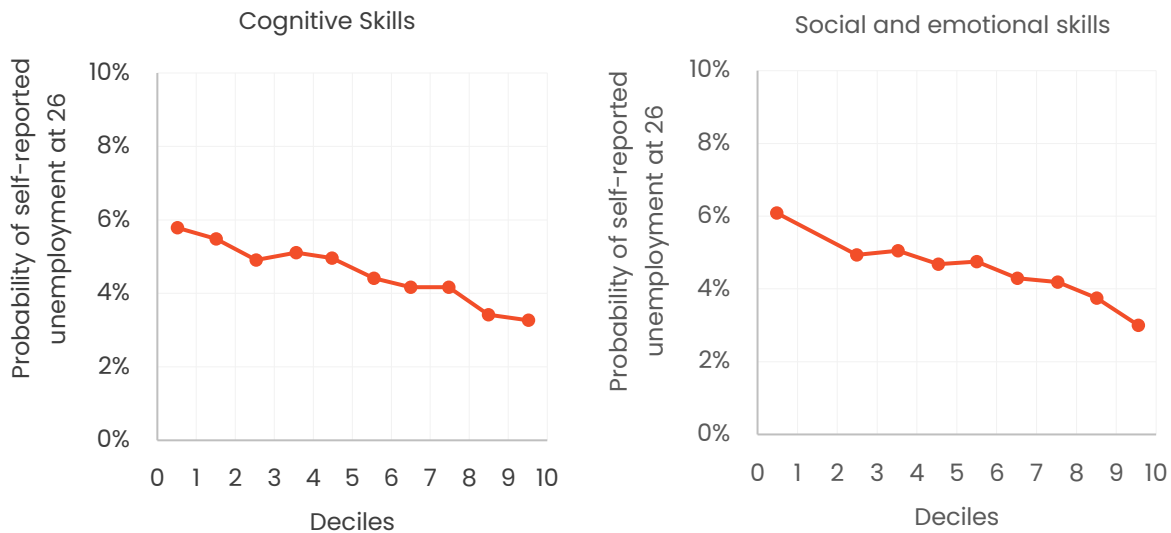
Conversations with school leaders held in preparation of this report supported these findings, with teachers noting that the enrichment a school provides is what enables 'buy in' from pupils. In simple terms, enrichment helps pupils view school as a positive and enjoyable experience, which in turn makes them engage more in lessons.

### Impact on cultural capital and soft skills

Encouraging children to participate in enrichment activities is one of the most successful ways to build softer skills. The OECD's Skills for Social Progress demonstrates that hands-on learning and extracurricular activities can help children improve their ability to work in a team, sense of responsibility and self-confidence.<sup>22</sup> OECD modelling suggests that in the UK, high social and emotional skills are better determinants of low likelihood of unemployment at the age of 26 than cognitive skills. This makes the UK unique - the majority of other countries included in the study registered cognitive skills as more important.

**Figure 4: Probability of self-reported unemployment at age 26 by skill deciles**

Source: Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills



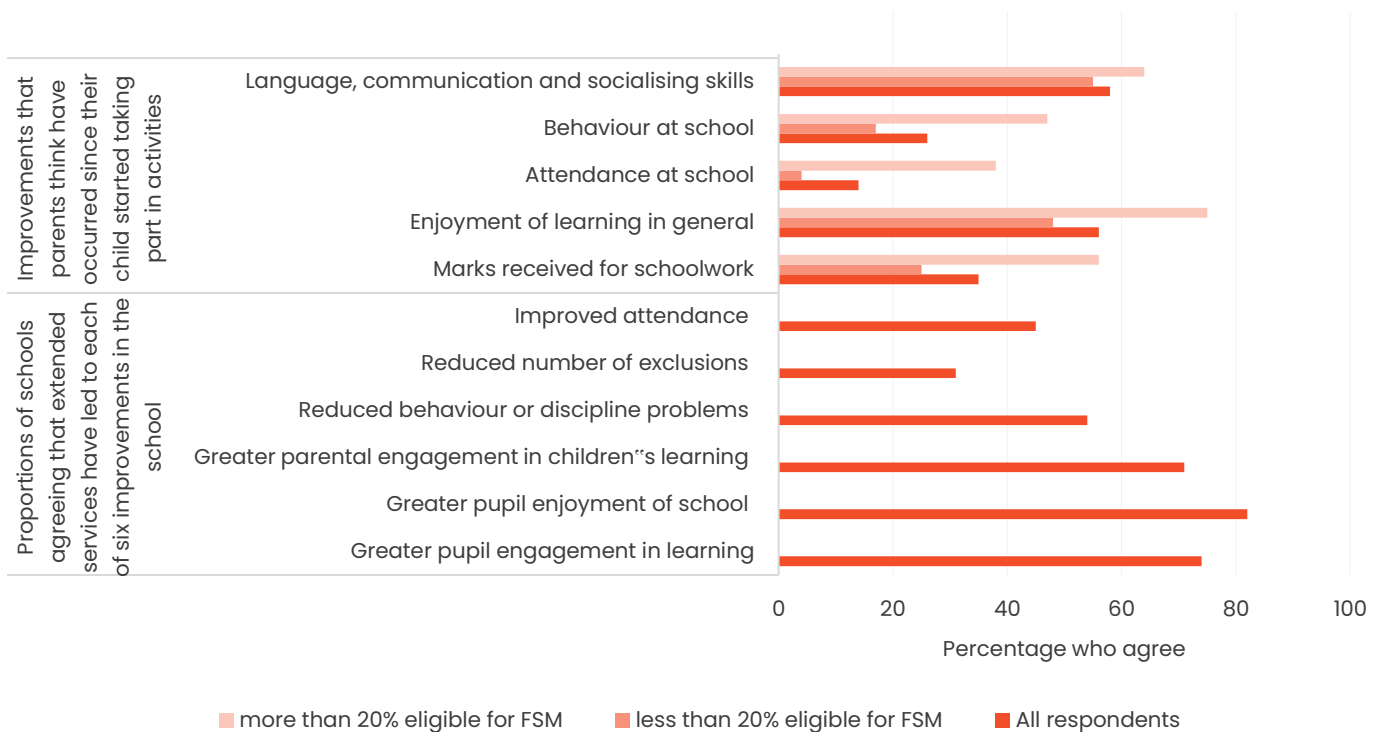
Successful trials of enrichment programmes have demonstrated the link between engaging in extracurricular activities and stronger soft skills. The Essential Life Skills programme ran from 2018 - 2019, and gave children from 5 - 18 years old the chance to participate in extracurricular activities like sport, arts, debating, and IT in designated Opportunity Areas. The evaluation of the programme found that young people, providers, and Opportunity Area representatives involved in the scheme

reported improvements to confidence, resilience, relationship building and social and emotional intelligence of the young people involved.<sup>23</sup> 78% of providers felt young people were more confident, 55% thought they had improved team working skills and 45% thought it increased resilience. Those involved also thought that over the long term behaviour, attendance and aspiration would be improved as a result.<sup>24</sup>

The benefits of school enrichment are also evidenced by the Extending Services in Schools programme which took place between 2003 and 2010. This programme piloted extended school days, offering a ‘varied menu of activities’ alongside childcare support between 8am and 6pm for primary schools and parental support for 1,500 primary and secondary schools.<sup>25</sup> The evaluation found that 74% saw greater pupil engagement in learning, 82% saw greater pupil engagement in school and 54% saw reduced poor behaviours or discipline problems. The survey also found that the impact was greatest in schools with higher levels of deprivation. Of schools with more than 20% of pupils on free school meals, almost 6 in 10 thought the scheme had a considerable influence, compared to just over 4 in 10 schools with fewer than 20% eligible for free school meals. Parents also saw positive results: 35% thought their child’s grades had improved, 56% reported greater enjoyment of learning and 58% reported improved language, communication and socialising skills. Once again, this was most effective in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils.

**Figure 5: Impact of Extending Services in Schools programme**

Source: *Extended services evaluation: End of Year One Report*



## Unequal access to enrichment

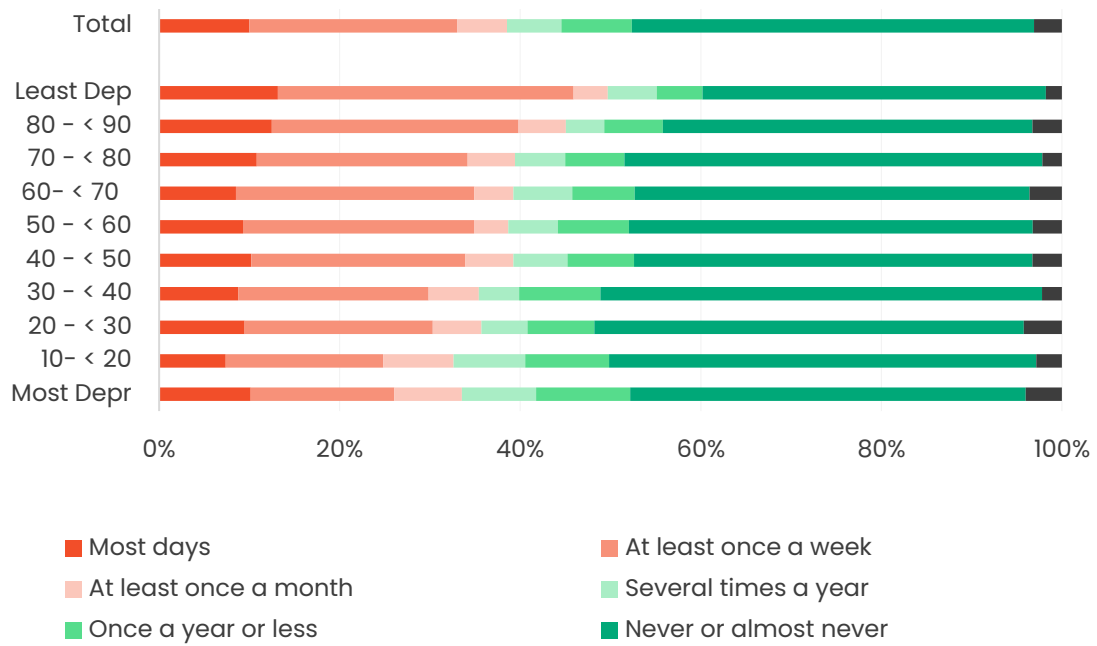
A new approach to school enrichment is further necessitated by uneven provision. Young people from disadvantaged families consistently have fewer opportunities to engage in activities like sport and arts, meaning that the benefits outlined above don't go to those who could benefit the most.

The American sociology Professor Annette Laureau has demonstrated that middle-class families are much more likely to encourage their children to engage in 'concerted cultivation'.<sup>26</sup> This means wealthier parents actively determine their child's leisure time, in order to nourish their talents and character, through helping them to engage with institutions and authority figures and participate in enriching activities. The Education Policy Institute has suggested that this practice could be a key driver of the disadvantage gap that we see in attainment today, as it gives middle-class children an academic advantage.<sup>27</sup>

The Millennium Cohort Study demonstrates this variation in enrichment activity participation. Using data from the 2015 wave, where participants were 14 years old, we can test which young people go to youth clubs, scouts or girl guides, those who sing in a choir or play in a band or orchestra and whether they play a musical instrument. When looked at against the Index of Multiple Deprivation, it shows that almost half (45%) of young people in the least deprived decile were attending youth clubs, scouts or girl guides weekly, compared to a quarter (26%) of the most deprived decile. Young people in the least deprived decile were three times more likely to sing in a choir or play in a band or orchestra weekly: 15% of least deprived versus 5% who are most deprived. Meanwhile over 50% of young people in the least deprived decile play a musical instrument, compared to under a third of those in the most deprived decile.

**Figure 6: Engagement in youth clubs, scouts, girl guides or other organised activities, by IMD decile, age 14, 2015**

Source: Millennium Cohort Study



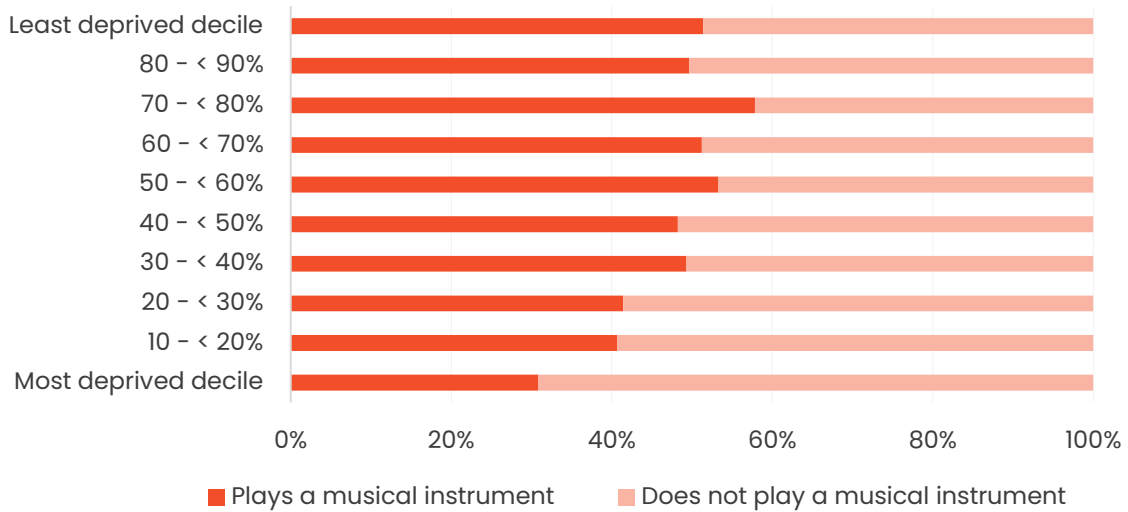
**Figure 7: Engagement in choir, band or orchestra by IMD decile, age 14, 2015**

Source: Millennium Cohort Study



**Figure 8: Play a musical instrument by IMD decile, age 14, 2015**

Source: Millennium Cohort Study

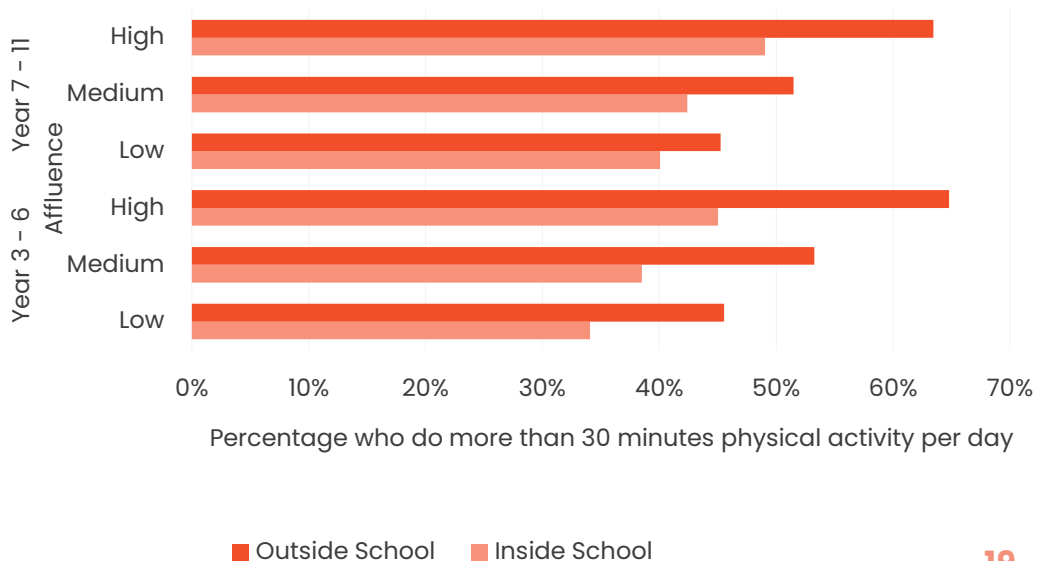


Young people from more deprived backgrounds are also much less likely to be physically active, particularly outside school. For those aged between 7 and 11, 45% of children from high affluence families do more than 30 minutes of physical activity per day in school compared to 34% of children from low affluence families. Around two thirds (65%) of children from high affluence families do more than 30 minutes activity outside of school while only 46% of those from low affluence families do.

Physical activity taking place outside of school is driving the difference between the most and least affluent young people. There is a 10% difference in the rate of physical activity in school between children aged 7 to 11 from low affluence families and children from high affluence families, but a 20% difference outside of school.

**Figure 9: Physical activity by year group and family affluence**

Source: Active Lives Survey, 2018/19



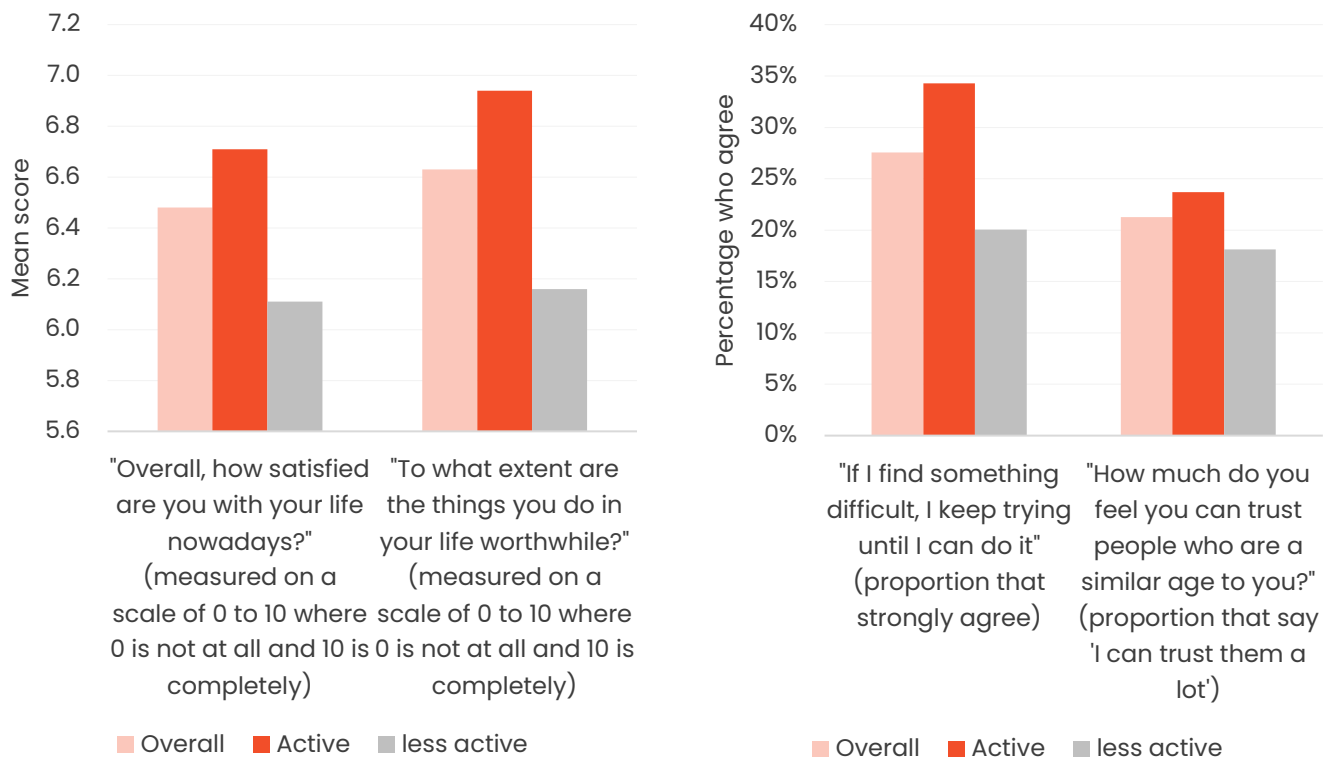
This matters because those who are active and participate in enrichment also tend to have higher levels of wellbeing and stronger soft skills such as resilience and trust. So when access to enrichment is unequal, outcomes are likely to be unequal as well.

In particular, it appears that activity levels are closely related to the extent to which 7 to 11 year olds are satisfied with their lives and feel their life is worthwhile. Active students gave on average 6.71 out of 10 for how satisfied they were and 6.94 for how worthwhile their life is, compared to a 6.11 and 6.16 for less active students respectively.

In line with rates of activity, young people from lower affluence family backgrounds also tend to have lower life satisfaction and soft skills. But crucially, those who are much more active fare better. On average, 7 to 11 year olds from poorer families scored the extent to which they see their life as worthwhile as 6.23 out of 10. But less active respondents from a similar background gave an average score of 5.71 out of 10. The disparity is most striking when looking at the extent to which young people agree with the statement 'If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it.' Those who do more than 60 minutes of activity a day are almost twice as likely to strongly agree with this statement than those who do less than 30 minutes activity.

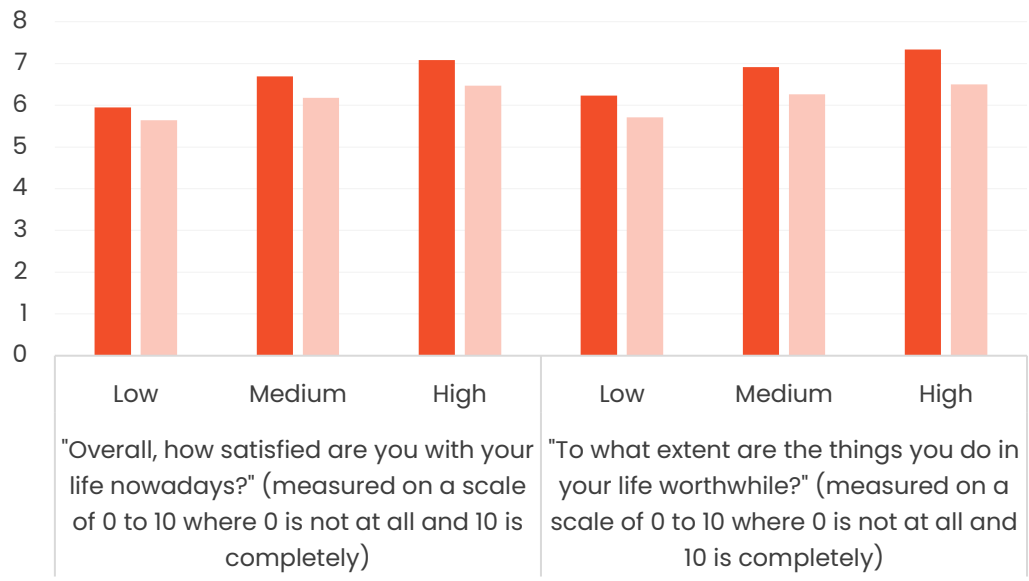
**Figure 10: Impact of activity on well-being and soft skills of 7-11 year olds**

Source: Active Lives Survey, 2018/19

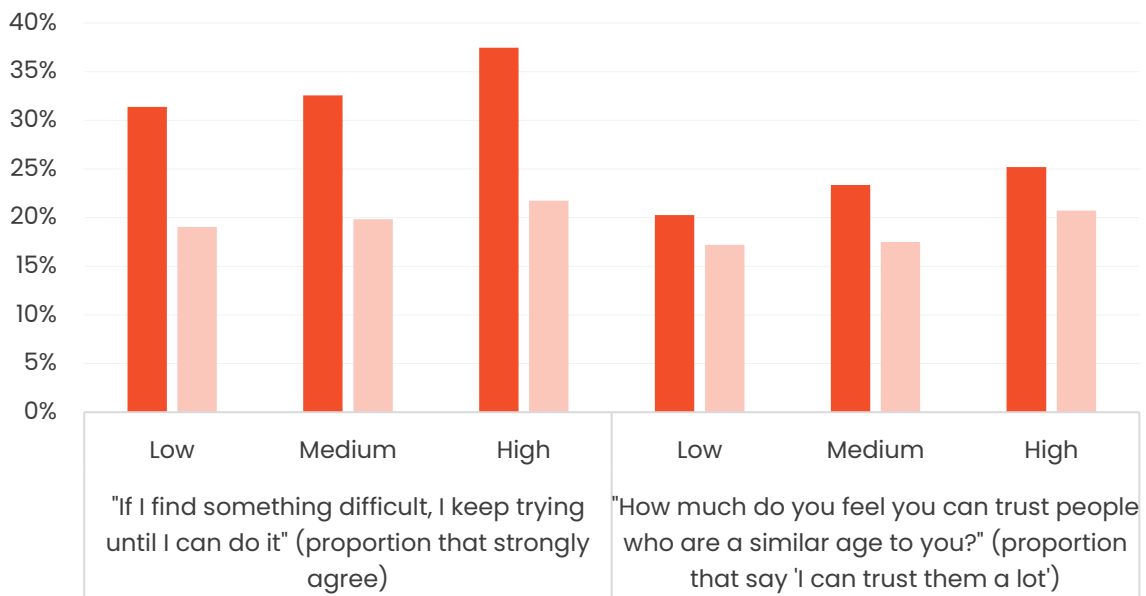


**Figure 11: Impact of activity on well-being and soft skills, by family affluence**

Source: Active Lives Survey, 2018/19



■ Active (an average of 60 minutes or more a day)  
■ Less active (less than an average of 30 minutes a day)



■ Active (an average of 60 minutes or more a day)  
■ Less active (less than an average of 30 minutes a day)



## How does this differ across the UK?

The rate at which young people participate in enrichment varies considerably across the UK. This is demonstrated by Understanding Society data, which specifically asks questions about what activities young people do outside of school.

Young people across the North East and West consistently participate less in enrichment outside of school. When ranked nationally, the North East is bottom for music participation, sixth (out of 12 regions) for art, 11th for dance and 10th for sport. Meanwhile the North West is 8th for music, 9th for art, 8th for dance and 11th for sport. These differences are particularly pronounced for activities which have a larger financial barrier to access, like music and dance. Young people in the South East were twice as likely (24% compared to 12%) to say they did music outside of school than young people in the North East, and 40% more likely to do dance. Almost 5 in 10 young people in London reported they played a musical instrument compared to 3 in 10 in the North East.

**Table 1: Share of youth who said they participated in the activity outside of school, by region**

Source: Wave J, Understanding Society, 2019–21

	Music	Dance	Sport	Art
East Midlands	22%	7%	48%	11%
East of England	17%	12%	57%	9%
London	21%	14%	55%	7%
North East	12%	6%	48%	9%
North West	17%	11%	42%	5%
Northern Ireland	18%	5%	49%	5%
Scotland	17%	14%	51%	12%
South East	24%	11%	57%	9%
South West	22%	14%	59%	5%
Wales	16%	10%	51%	12%
West Midlands	18%	16%	55%	4%
Yorkshire and the Humber	15%	13%	42%	17%

# Barriers to progress

What is holding schools back from delivering enrichment?



School leaders want the best for their pupils, and recognise offering a broad education is key. But despite good intentions many schools still struggle to deliver the level and breadth of enrichment that they and their pupils would like. This chapter examines the three key barriers - capacity, timing, and targeting.

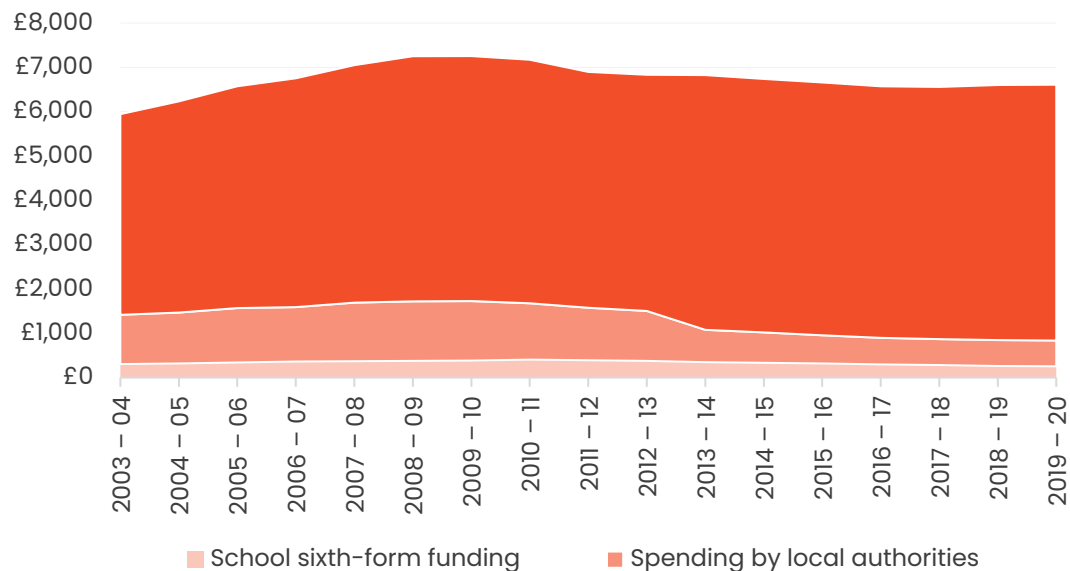
## Capacity

The largest barrier to school enrichment is capacity. School budgets are stretched following over a decade of limited investment. Total school spending per pupil was £568 lower in 2019/20 compared to in 2010/11.<sup>28</sup> In the most extreme cases, this has resulted in some schools closing their school gates early because they are struggling to make ends meet. For example in March 2019, Teacher Tapp found that 4% of schools surveyed were either closing early or considering doing so as a result of school funding.<sup>29</sup>

The Government has since responded to this shortfall. In the 2021 Spending Review the Chancellor announced a £4.7 billion increase to core schools funding in order to return school spending to 2010 levels. This uplift included a 2.7% increase in pupil premium for the 2022/23 academic year.<sup>30</sup> However, the Institute of Fiscal Studies recently found that spending per pupil will still be 3% lower in real terms by 2024/25 compared to 2010 levels.<sup>31</sup> The recent increases to teacher pay, which will see teachers receive between 5% and 9% pay rises, will add additional financial strain on school budgets as they do not come with additional Government support. This is alongside the rise in energy bills that schools have been hit by. The former Government intervened with an energy guarantee for the public sector which should limit the scale of the crisis, but some school leaders fear even a limited increase in bills could be a problem for school budgets.<sup>32</sup>

**Figure 12: School spending per pupil, 2021/22 prices**

Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies



The outcome of these financial pressures is there is rarely enough funding left to dedicate to activities that are not set out clearly in the national curriculum. This is especially true for activities that require expensive equipment and specialist teaching. Teacher Tapp polling carried out in August found schools were having to make considerable cuts to cover teacher salaries and rising bills.<sup>33</sup> Curriculum resources were raised as the most common area to receive a cut in funding, but school trips and extracurricular activities were also raised as examples of what schools were deprioritising. One education leader reportedly said ‘there is nothing left to cut’, signifying the financial challenge that schools face in the months ahead.<sup>34</sup> Others have suggested that increased teacher salaries have added an additional six figures to their annual outgoings, causing them to abandon building repairs, school trips and reducing heating to cover costs.<sup>35</sup>

This is supported by Sutton Trust polling, which found 16% of school leaders have cut back on extracurricular activities due to financial pressures and 25% have cut back on providing trips and outings.<sup>36</sup> Research by the same organisation also finds that two in five parents report being asked to contribute more financially in the last two years. In some cases this was simply to cover the costs of running the school whereas in others it was specifically to fund things like sports equipment.<sup>37</sup>

And where there is money to spare, historically it has not always been used as ministers and education practitioners would hope or evidence would support. The Pupil Premium is regularly used to pay teaching assistants or, as the Education Select Committee argued, “to plug holes in schools budgets rather than being directed at disadvantaged children”.<sup>38</sup> The Sutton Trust’s 2022 report into the Pupil Premium found that 13% of schools were using this funding to hire teaching assistants, which was the second most popular option after providing more one-to-one tutoring. 21% of schools reported using the Pupil Premium to plug gaps in their school budgets.

The practice of funding being funnelled away from extracurricular activities is further evidenced by the existing PE and Sports Premium. This premium, which amounts to £320 million of Government spending annually, is supposed to be ring fenced to help primary schools improve the quality of the PE, physical activity and sport they provide. The Department for Education provides guidance on how it should be spent, including to build capacity, train and develop PE teachers, and broaden the activities that are on offer.

However in reality this funding consistently gets funnelled into other parts of the school to cover holes in their budgets. Recent reporting has named incidences where schools used the premium to fund ipads for students or a minibus for the school.<sup>39</sup> This is enabled by limited oversight and poor accountability arrangements. Schools are required to publish how they spend their PE and Sports Premium, and can have the funding revoked if it is spent inappropriately. However in 2018, Schools Week reported that Department for Education had not docked funding for misuse once

since the Premium's inception.<sup>40</sup> Schools can copy and paste their declaration into how it is spent year on year with little repercussion. An investigation carried out by Durham University into a sample of 423 primary schools found that only around 60% were fully compliant with Department for Education requirements to publish how the Premium is spent, and 12% had not reported their spending at all.<sup>41</sup>

## Timing

It is not just financial capacity which is limiting schools ability to provide enrichment, but workforce constraints too. At its best school enrichment is built into everyday school life through a longer school day. It is planned and structured like any other subject. But to do this requires individuals who are willing to devote their time to enrichment, which often falls to teachers who are volunteering their own time.

In practice this tends to result in schools in wealthier areas being more able to extend their school day. When surveyed by Teacher Tapp, 97% of fee-paying secondary schools ended compulsory lessons after 3.15pm, 87% of schools in the top quartile by affluence (Q1), 79% of those in Q2, 77% of those in Q3 and just 71% of those in Q4 - the schools in the least affluent parts of the country. Some of these earlier finishes are counteracted by schools in poorer areas being more likely to start school before 8.30am.<sup>42</sup> Introducing longer school days is also difficult given the average teacher in England already works longer hours than their international counterparts. In 2018, lower-secondary teachers in England were working 49.3 hours per week, compared to the OECD average of 41 hours.<sup>43</sup> In primary schools, teachers averaged 52.1 hours a week, which was the second highest of all countries after Japan. This leads a majority of teachers (53% for primary and 57% for lower-secondary) feeling their workload is unmanageable.

And even if teachers were able to work longer hours, there are limits to how many they can work. The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) states that a classroom teacher can only be directed by the headteacher to work for up to a maximum of 1,265 hours over 195 days of the year. If distributed evenly this works out as a 32.4 hour week of directed teaching time. However in reality teachers are working much longer hours, and in some cases school leaders have taken to introducing 2 week half terms in order to keep below the 1,265 cap.<sup>44</sup> Other schools, particularly in some Multi-Academy Trusts like Inspiration and Star have managed to lengthen the school day without adding additional time onto the day of teachers, by scheduling staff meeting times efficiently and rethinking how teachers take part in professional development.<sup>45</sup>

## Targeting

On top of capacity constraints, there are valid questions around how to make sure the pupils that could benefit most from participating in enrichment are able to do so. Where schools have attempted to extend their after-school activities offer and there

has been low take-up, or low take-up amongst pupils on free school meals, they will understandably have reservations about expanding their offer.

After school enrichment is particularly challenging for pupils whose parents are working long or unreliable hours. Pupils may not be able to rely on parents to take them to activities or pick them up later if the extended timetable means public transport is not an option, especially in winter months.<sup>46</sup> In addition, children who are young carers may not have time after school to devote to enrichment.

The Social Mobility Commission argues children from disadvantaged backgrounds can also be less likely to participate in enrichment because they lack confidence in their own abilities and whether they would be considered 'cool' for taking part in such clubs.<sup>47</sup> They found children, especially those who were attending new schools, were concerned that they would be looked down on for attending school clubs. Others showed reluctance to take up music for example because they would "just do it wrong".<sup>48</sup> This is supported by a number of qualitative studies that have suggested individuals from lower income families may be more likely to drop out of after-school clubs and enrichment programmes because they are concerned about fitting in with their wider peer group.<sup>49</sup> The Social Mobility Commission's qualitative interviews suggested low confidence levels around one's ability to partake in activities came through much stronger among disadvantaged pupils than those who were middle-class.<sup>50</sup>

Where take-up of existing enrichment is low due to difficulties in getting to and from a venue, or a reluctance to attend, introducing more provision onsite in school can help. But when trying to expand the use of their buildings, schools often face significant hurdles. Concerns like prohibitive PFI contracts, cleaning schedules and security requirements make opening school buildings for longer difficult. The National Audit Office found that 20% of organisations with PFI contracts (including hospitals, prisons and schools) faced challenges when attempting to coordinate between local authorities and the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) managing the contract, with one authority struggling to inspect maintenance work because the SPV denied access to areas of the school.<sup>51</sup> This means that a huge resource in communities up and down the country is being wasted as too many school sports halls, pitches and theatres are closed in the hours where the majority of the working population would naturally play sport or pursue their own hobbies.

This suggests an 'if you build it they will come' approach to school enrichment simply will not cut it. Ministers and policymakers need to consider why it is that schools can't deliver the level of enrichment that they aspire to. Clearly the largest component to this problem is capacity. Schools have worked exceptionally hard over the last two years to keep their children safe and prevent them from falling behind. This has put additional strain on the financial resources schools have access too which were already limited. And as evidenced by the PE and Sport premium, without clear guidance and strong accountability measures additional funding may not have

the desired effect. But ministers also need to take into account the wider reasons school enrichment may not work by recognising the barriers young people face to take part. These range from logistical hurdles like transport and having sufficient free time to take part, but also questions of culture, helping schools to communicate the value of taking part and ultimately getting the 'buy in' they need for enrichment to be a success.

# Recommendations





## Addressing capacity constraints

**Recommendation 1.** Introduce a new, ring-fenced, enrichment premium to facilitate partnerships with civic groups

Ministers should introduce a new enrichment premium for primary and secondary schools. This funding, allocated per pupil, will be ring-fenced to be used for enrichment purposes. It should be introduced alongside guidance to schools that this funding allocation should be spent with external providers, such as youth services or charity partners or to facilitate such purposes, such as by purchasing necessary equipment or transport options for pupils.

Similar recommendations have been made by the Social Mobility Commission who called for a 'national extracurricular bursary scheme' to provide ring fenced funding for the most disadvantaged pupils to access enrichment, on top of funding to develop strong links between third sector services. The Centre for Education and Youth and the Times Education Commission have also put forward the possibility of an enrichment premium to scale up non-formal learning.

This model of school enrichment is already used widely by many schools. By working with community groups and charity partners schools are able to develop a structured programme of extracurricular activities without overburdening teacher timetables. This can include working with national delivery partners, for example NCS or the Duke of Edinburgh, which has recently been granted £22 million to enable every young person the chance to participate in the Award by 2025. Elsewhere it is made possible through partnerships on a more local level, or through brokering organisations like the West London Zone who make it their mission to link up expertise in schools and the community.

Working with community groups and the third sector is also a much more cost effective way of delivering enrichment. The Department for Education's 2017 research report into extended activity provision in Secondary Schools found that where provision was provided by the community or voluntary sector, it was considerably cheaper than commercial partners. In particular, their survey found 24% of voluntary or community organisations provided services free of charge, compared to just 7% of commercial providers. Of those providers who did charge for their services, over 35% of voluntary or community groups charged less than £3 per pupil per session, compared to approximately 8% of commercial providers. Where providers did charge for services the cost tended to be directed at the school or the parents.

**Figure 13: Cost of provision by provider type**

Source: *Extended Activity Provision in Secondary Schools, Gov.uk*



There are a number of ways the enrichment premium could be allocated to schools. As an initial premise, guidance should state that enrichment should be a whole school activity, built into the school day, with an expectation that all pupils will participate.

The premium should be designed to support the minimum enrichment provision that schools should be expected to provide. It should not be used to replace existing efforts that schools go to funding enrichment, for example through their own fundraising schemes. As the Department for Education's research report evidenced, a number of schools, in particular Multi-Academy Trusts who have more financial flexibility, have made a decision to hire a fundraiser in the hope that their efforts will offset the costs of an additional paid employee.<sup>52</sup>

To help schools build links in the community, and to enable charities to engage with schools locally, new guidance should state that every school should have a dedicated enrichment coordinator. It could be funded through the proposed enrichment premium or out of the existing school budget. This role, which could be part-time or undertaken alongside another role like a careers advisor, should be publicised on notice boards within the school and relevant websites. This would help organisations who are keen to work with schools know who is the best point of contact. The purpose of this role would be to build relationships with groups in the community, identify opportunities and provide the administrative support for tracking progress and managing funding streams. Aligning this role with a careers advisor role would also help schools to work with local businesses who are interested in supporting their local community.

The enrichment premium should replace the PE and Sports Premium that primary schools currently receive. The PE and sports premium, which is allocated at £16,000 plus £10 per head for primary schools with over 17 pupils, is designed for additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of the PE, physical activity and sport.

The new enrichment premium will be more generous than the PE and Sport Premium, given it is intended for a greater level of provision, but will be accompanied by much closer monitoring and scrutiny to ensure children are benefitting as much as possible from the funding.

This would allocate funding to every mainstream primary and secondary school, calculated by their total pupil intake and how many sessions would be delivered each week. For example:

Working on the assumption that pupils will do 3 enrichment sessions a week, at 40 minutes long, allocating £2 per pupil per session. This means, as there are an average of 195 teaching days a year, and on 117 of these days there will be enrichment, £234 per pupil per year. If this was offered to every pupil in a mainstream primary or secondary school this would cost £1.9 billion per year.

While this is a considerable amount of money, it is substantially lower than the costs of the previous Recovery Plan set out by Sir Kevan Collins, which was rumoured to be in the region of £15 billion. Replacing the PE and Sports premium would save £350 million to go towards enrichment. The current National Tutoring Programme is also expected to be underspent considerably. As of March 2022, there had been 887,000 tutoring starts against a target of 2 million. This means that the Department may be able to recoup a portion of the £1.5 billion already announced, and direct the money back to schools to support enrichment.

#### Calculations:

**Pupil numbers** = 8,222,891 (Primary = 4,655,513, Secondary = 3,567,378)

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**Teaching days** = 195 days    **Assuming 3 days out of 5 for enrichment** = 117 days

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£2 per session per pupil x 117 days = **£234 per pupil per annum**

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£234 x 8,222,891 = **£1.9 billion per annum**

**Recommendation 1.1.** A strengthened accountability model for the enrichment premium

Policymakers will need to ensure appropriate accountability arrangements around this additional funding for schools, especially in light of the PE and Sports Premium. For this reason we suggest the enrichment premium grant should be paid into an account for each school. This would allocate them with an academic year's worth of grant funding, where all schools would receive this grant and would not have to apply for it. They would then have the option of spending it with civic groups or youth organisations locally who have signed up to work with schools or they could draw it down to use internally, for example to cover the cost of staff to organise the enrichment or necessary equipment. If schools do draw down the funding into their budgets they would be required to declare what it is being spent on. Where schools do not spend the money allocated on enrichment, the funds will expire and accrue back to the Education and Skills Funding Agency in a similar model to the Apprenticeship Levy account. This would not replace the necessary discussions and due-diligence that would be required to build partnerships with groups in the community, but would serve as a platform to link up schools with providers and create the incentives to do so.

Over time if this model is seen as successful, it could become a wider portal for ringfenced school grants. For example, the National Tutoring Programme funding could also be delivered through this mechanism with the necessary reporting included on this website too.

### Addressing time constraints

**Recommendation 2.** Publish new guidance recommending all schools add 2 hours to their school week to allow time for enrichment after school.

Inspired by best practice in the UK and around the world, Ministers should put forward new guidance detailing how schools could extend their school week. This approach, which could amount to the school day starting at 8.30am and finishing at 3.45pm, would allow an extra 40 minutes of teaching three days a week to be used for enrichment. The other two days a week, schools could either use for academic purposes such as catch-up and tutoring or could offer earlier finishes on those days. Where young people have personal commitments preventing them from staying in school later, for example caring for siblings, then schools should make every effort to identify these individuals and cater to them. This is especially important given it is usually those from poorer households who are most likely to have these responsibilities.

A similar model is already used by many schools, including some of the highest performing Multi-Academy Trusts. For example, Inspiration Trust, has managed to extend their school days successfully so that between Year 7 and Year 11, children receive an additional 500 days teaching, equating to 20 additional weeks of learning. Star Academy has been able to do something similar, for example Eden Girls' School allocates between 3pm and 3.45pm to a combination of academic intervention and enrichment, made possible by teachers giving up their own time and through a combination of external partnerships who are committed to helping their local area.

Crucially both these examples involve extending the school day without an overreliance on teachers. Through working with charities and local groups in the community, and using teachers as the enablers rather than those delivering enrichment, it is possible to build enrichment into the curriculum without pushing the limits on teachers' contracted hours. Inspiration Trust does this through efficient planning of staff meetings and professional development training in order to streamline teacher timetables.

In addition, where teachers are required to be on site, to help with the enrichment provision and for safeguarding purposes, it should be down to the school to decide whether they wish to use enrichment premium funding to reimburse them.

This should be alongside efforts to reduce the amount of time teachers spend at work but not in front of students. OECD data suggests this can amount to 32.7 hours per week, compared to an average of 20.5 hours for teaching time among lower-secondary teachers.

To help schools to think about how they might be able to streamline their workforce, ministers should consider a renewed focus for School Resource Management Advisors (SRMAs) to identify cost savings by limiting teachers' hours where possible. The SRMA programme has been extended to August 2024 as a result of the National Audit Office finding SRMAs identified £303 million in savings and 84% of schools reporting their experience was 'good' or 'very good' with the advisors.<sup>53</sup>

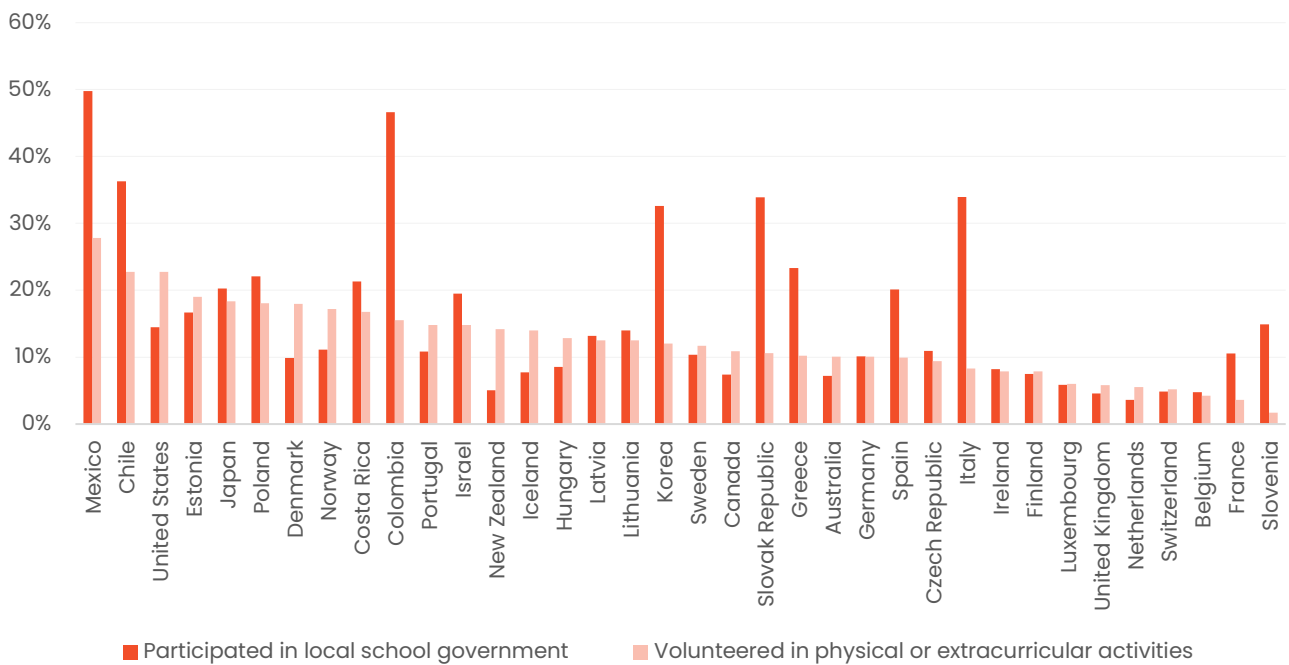
Looking ahead, there could also be better use of technology to reduce teacher workload, for example adopting approaches like *No More Marking* and moving more teaching resources online, as set out in the recent Schools White Paper. *No More Marking* uses artificial intelligence and comparative judgement to mark student's writing and save teachers time, while delivering accurate results.<sup>54</sup>

**Recommendation 3.** Issue a call for a new ‘army of volunteers’ using parents who want to help provide enrichment activities

Parents in the United Kingdom are far less likely to engage in everyday school life compared to the OECD and beyond. The PISA 2018 report suggests that just 5% of parents in the UK are engaged in school governance and 6% in physical or extracurricular activities. This compares to 14% and 23% in the United States, 17% and 19% in Estonia and 10% for both in Germany. In parts of Asia parental involvement is considerably higher. For example 82% are involved in school governance and 70% in physical or extracurricular activities in the Philippines.<sup>55</sup>

**Figure 14: Parental involvement in school activities, OECD countries**

Source: PISA 2018



To assist in creating a culture of enrichment in schools and bring parents along with the plans to lengthen the school day, ministers should create a new pathway for parents to help in schools. This new army of volunteers should seek to capture the spirit of volunteering that was unleashed during the pandemic where over 750,000 people signed up to the NHS’ call for volunteers in just four days and there was a huge growth in hyper-local volunteering schemes too.<sup>56</sup>

If Ministers could increase the number of parents helping with extracurricular activities to 10%, assuming one parent per child, this could provide an army of over 180,000 parents in primary school alone. This should amount to a huge recruitment drive to get parents to sign up to help in schools, asking them to commit to the days they would help and easing the process of going through DBS checks. This should

not water down the important safeguarding checks that would need to be carried about, but would create a system that is more transparent and cheaper for individuals and schools to go through. The responsibility to run the enhanced DBS checks should go to the local authority, and ministers could consider reintroducing the free checks for those working in education as they did up until 2013. It is already the case that unpaid volunteers are only required to pay the charge of a regular DBS (£18) but the Department for Education could subsidise the entirety of the cost. By allowing local authorities to undertake this role it could also speed up the process as they will typically have an organisation who can run DBS checks. In the longer term they should seek to create real-time information on how long someone should expect to wait for their check to be cleared to enable them to plan accordingly and introduce clearer step-by-step instructions as to how small charities can meet safeguarding requirements.

These efforts could also extend to wider groups in the community. For example by encouraging local businesses to build up partnership schemes with schools whereby their staff volunteer their time. To encourage more people to get involved ministers should consider extending the rights that individuals have to request time off to volunteer. Employees are already entitled to request “reasonable time” off work for specific civic duties, for example if an individual is a local councillor or a school governor. These rights could be expanded to support parents or indeed employees to allocate time to helping in schools. This could lead to a more formalised process whereby employers are closely aligned with the education institutions in their areas. This recommendation is explored in greater detail in Onward’s recent paper, *The Kids Aren’t Alright*.<sup>57</sup>

## Improve targeting

**Recommendation 4.** Open school buildings for longer to facilitate enrichment and enable more of the community to use the grounds

Large portions of England’s sports facilities are located in schools. Sport England data indicates 2 in 5 sports facilities are on school sites, including 30,000 grass pitches, over 3,000 sports halls and 1,400 swimming pools.<sup>58</sup> And while the majority - three in five - are open to community use, this leaves almost 40% of sports facilities potentially sitting empty outside of school hours. Not only is this a poor use of a potentially valuable asset for a community, but it also means schools are not benefiting financially from their assets. Sport England estimates that a sports hall the size of four badminton courts could bring a school approximately £15,000 net income annually if used for 26 hours per week.

This could take inspiration from Aldridge Education in Brighton. The multi-academy trust uses its cricket facilities for their own pupils but also, to help maintain the state

school leading facilities, hires them out to Sussex Cricket, the Southern Vipers (South of England women's cricket team) and other local sports organisations. The facilities also provide additional community value through hosting an extensive women and girls cricket community programme supporting physical and mental wellbeing and community cohesion.

Ministers should consider how to help schools use their school grounds in this manner outside of teaching hours, as many schools already do. This could amount to giving local community organisations, sports associations and charities access to sports facilities on certain evenings or on the weekends, either in return for payment or for offering enrichment opportunities to school pupils.

**Recommendation 4.1.** Encourage schools to create dual entry systems to allow secure access from members of the public outside of teaching hours.

Ministers should set out in clear guidance how schools can open outside of school hours. This should include creating or repurposing an alternate entry route into the school grounds, providing access either to sports facilities or school halls, so that members of the public can come and go without creating risk for the wider school.<sup>59</sup>

Where PFI contracts are prohibiting schools from being used in such a way, the Department for Education should step in to support the negotiation. As Onward has previously argued, children's fortunes should not be limited as a result of a long-term financing arrangement, which all too often is the case.<sup>60</sup> Ministers should place themselves firmly on the side of schools who are attempting to negotiate with PFI providers to allow flexibility. A similar approach to the Contract Expiry Unit could be used, which the Department for Education set up to help schools when PFI contracts have less than five years left.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately PFI contract holders regularly hold contracts across the public sector and should be incentivised to act in good faith.

More widely the Department should publish guidance, in a similar manner to the Scottish Government's approach, to help schools navigate the complexities of keeping schools open after hours. This might include questions surrounding caretaking and building cleaning arrangements, arranging for CCTV to operate for longer periods of time, relevant insurance, and providing parking access onsite where possible.

**Recommendation 5.** Expand the operation of free school transport to help all pupils spend more time in school after lessons, funded by the enrichment premium

At present pupils in full-time education of compulsory school age can be eligible for free school transport. Pupils are eligible if the school is over 2 miles away and they are under 8, over 3 miles away and over 8, there is no safe walking route between their home and school or if they have a disability that prevents their ability to get to




and from school.<sup>62</sup> For those who come from low income families, eligibility is extended for those whose schools are between 2 and 6 miles away. This provision can be free transport in the form of a bus or train, or can be in the form of a voucher which contributes to the cost of transport. The programme is operated by local authorities.

If schools are open for longer, ministers should stipulate that local authorities have a duty to make sure safe and free transport is available after enrichment, as part of their duty to provide free transport. If, as intended, enrichment is a whole school activity this should not incur additional cost as it would only involve shifting the existing transport to a later time. This will be particularly pressing in winter months where attendance of after-school clubs is naturally lower as a result of colder temperatures and less daylight. Where schools do not feel that the available transport routes are sufficient, the dedicated enrichment coordinator should be responsible for working with the local authority to organise additional school buses to safely transport students to and from school, rather than relying on public routes. Where possible, provision should be made for all school pupils to have access to transport routes, with those that are not eligible for free school meals paying a small fee.

# Conclusion





The new Prime Minister has called education ‘the closest thing to a silver bullet’ in terms of improving opportunity across the country. If this is the case, they need to start looking at the deficits in the school system. When introduced effectively, structured enrichment in the school day has been proven to improve academic outcomes and help instil the cultural capital that is relied upon in later life. Yet right now enrichment is too often being preserved for the few and the outcome is disadvantaged children are not yielding the benefits.

While money is tight right now, improving outcomes in schools cannot be put on hold. The Conservatives have always understood this, the Pupil Premium was introduced in 2011 despite the pressures on the public budget. And the plan presented here is designed to leverage what is already located in many communities but is currently being underutilised. If this Government is serious about harnessing education to change lives it needs to be backed up with some tangible and ambitious action. Setting out a new vision for what we expect from our schools and how this could be achieved would do just that.

# Endnotes



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- <sup>1</sup> Department for Education (November 2010), The Case for Change
  - <sup>2</sup> Department for Education (September 2019), National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2019 (provisional)
  - <sup>3</sup> Carl Cullinane, The Sutton Trust (October 2022), What we've learned from the cosmo study
  - <sup>4</sup> Department for Education (December 2014), Measuring disadvantaged pupils' attainment gaps over time (updated), Statistical Working Paper
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