Research for Teachers

The impact of study support

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Does studying out of school hours benefit pupils?
For this TLA research summary we selected a research project that explores the effectiveness of different types of study support for pupils in secondary schools. Most of the students involved in the study were in Years 9 to 11 although some data were collected on pupils from Years 7 and 8. The TLA research team believes that the illustrative examples from the case studies provide evidence of good practice in study support that is also potentially transferable into mainstream classroom teaching and learning.

The authors looked at over 50 schools, and their analysis led them to conclude that actually, certain types of study support were more effective in improving pupil performance than others. They also found that study support influenced pupil attitudes, attendance rates and self-esteem as well as attainment. The study examines a wide variety of study support arrangements in different school contexts and offers some helpful insights into the different types of organisation, management and teacher involvement in these out-of-school activities.

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Overview

Why is the issue important?

Recent expectations of parents, school governors and the government about the raising of academic standards have helped to stimulate schools' interest in creating more time for learning through out-of-school sessions. Knowing how study support can help raise the achievement of pupils is potentially useful not just in out-of-school-hours sessions, but in mainstream classrooms too.

What did the research show?

Study support had a value added effect on student achievement - assessment data suggested an improvement of around three and a half grades on students' best five GCSE results (equivalent to one A-C pass). For students from minority ethnic groups the improvement corresponded to two grades and for disadvantaged students in receipt of free school meals, the improvement corresponded to one grade. Participation in study support also had a favourable effect on students' attitudes to school. They showed an increased willingness to be involved in class activities and raised attendance).

How was this achieved?

Out-of-school activities comprised subject-focused activities in exam related subjects as well as non-subject focused activities, such as: study skills, 'drop-in' activities, peer support, and sport and aesthetic activities. Students liked the fact that study support was voluntary and learner-centred. They also enjoyed the more relaxed and informal relationship they had with their teachers, the sociable learning environment and the ethos of achievement. It helped them gain a greater sense of control and fostered independent learning.

How was the research designed to be trustworthy?

The researchers studied the impact of out-of-school activities in over 50 schools (around 8,000 students mostly in Years 9-11) using a range of data sources, including: student records, interviews, observations, monitoring records, and assessment data. They investigated student and teacher perceptions, attitudes, relationships, participation rates, student attendance and learning outcomes using multiple regression analysis. Outcomes were correlated with gender, and ethnic and social background as well as study support. Further data about qualitative aspects of study support was collected from another 85 schools and twelve case study schools provided detailed insights into what went on during the activities.

What are the implications?

The study showed the value of:

- creating a school culture in which the idea of study support is accepted as a natural part of school life
- promoting the popular features of out-of-school study support within the classroom, such as the relaxed, discursive, adult atmosphere of interactive learning and peer discussion
- capitalising on sports, aesthetic and other, non-subject based extra-curricular provision to build a more pro-learning culture for students who are vulnerable to 'anti-school' messages from peers
- utilising the capacity of out-of-school sessions to provide a safe context in which to experiment with different teaching and learning approaches for professional development.

What do the case studies illustrate?

The case studies describe activities that were designed to:

- introduce a different type of learning experience to students
- enable students to improve basic skills so they could access the curriculum successfully
- extend learning by building on what students do in school
- enrich learning by giving students opportunities to do new things
- broaden education experiences to include the world outside school
- enhance students' self-esteem and confidence

- contribute to the raising of educational standards in urban areas by developing study support centres in professional clubs.

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Study

What did the researchers set out to do?

The authors believe that recent expectations of parents, school governors and government on the raising of academic standards have stimulated schools to make more use of the time available for learning, by using time outside normal school hours. This has created interest in teaching and learning activities beyond the classroom. Sport and aesthetic activities have been developed and, increasingly, pedagogic ones too. How effective is such support in raising pupil achievement? In what ways do pupils benefit from these activities? How are staff involved and how do they change their practice in out-of-school hour sessions?

The report describes the findings from a three-year longitudinal evaluation, the Study Support National Evaluation and Development Programme, of the impact on pupils of participation in out-of-school-hours study support.

The work was undertaken by researchers from the University of Strathclyde, together with the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) and Create Consultancy. The research team looked at the impact of study support activities in a large number of schools. Information was collected on about 8,000 pupils, involving 51 secondary schools all nominated by LEAs interested in development work on study support. The LEAs involved were predominantly situated in major urban centres like Birmingham, Liverpool and London with a small number from more rural settings in Scotland. A range of data sources including pupil records, interviews, observations, monitoring records, and assessment data were used.

The research investigated pupil and teacher perceptions, attitudes, relationships between teachers and pupils, participation rates, pupil attendance and learning outcomes. Further data about qualitative aspects of study support was collected from another 85 schools which came from a wide range of geographical areas of the UK and included urban and county LEAs. Twelve case study schools provided detailed insights into what went on during the activities.

What is study support?

The authors classified out-of-school-hours activities into these two main groups:

- subject focused
- non subject focused.

Subject focused activities were then subdivided into those which could be uniquely classified as English, mathematics or science, and those others which were either combinations of the core subjects, or, any other examrelated subject either on its own or in a combination. All of the sub ject focused activities were teacher directed, and had been adopted by schools for use in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Non subject focused activities were developed mainly for students in Years 10 and 11. These activities fell into seven groups that the authors grouped as:

- study skills
- drop-in
- mentoring
- peer education
- aesthetic

- sport
- other.

Study skills activities had been developed in a small number (12 per cent) of schools. These activities were structured and led by staff and were aimed at the development of students' thinking skills and examination preparation. One such activity was a philosophy course.

So-called drop-in activities were widespread among the schools studied. These activities took many forms ranging from designated study centres to breakfast, lunch and homework clubs. A common feature of these activities was that they were non-specific in terms of subject, the choice of which depended on the students' interests.

In about one in five of the schools in the study, Year 10 and 11 students helped younger students in some kind of peer support activity. Students in approximately 40 per cent of the schools underwent mentoring. This was a particular feature of the 'Playing for success' initiative launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in partnership with professional football clubs.

The sport and aesthetics activities included in this study were separate from examination subject activities in these areas. The definition of aesthetics and sport included diverse activities mainly related to performance and encompassed traditional sports, such as football and hockey, public speaking and steel band, as well as more traditional music and dance. Activities grouped as 'other' included the Duke of Edinburgh Award and newspaper production.

Who co-ordinated study support and how was it monitored?

In most schools the study support co-ordinator was a senior teacher and member of the senior management team. In other schools a member of middle management, such as a head of department, or a head of year occupied the role. In a smaller number of cases the study support co-ordinator was a main scale teacher. Study support co-ordinators invariably had close links with senior management, which had the twin function of establishing a high profile for study support in the eyes of the school community and giving the co-ordinator access to policy-making and resources. Study support coordinators were allowed non-contact time which varied from one to several teaching periods. In two of the twelve case study schools the co-ordinator also had responsibility for information and communication technology (ICT), this then tended to become a major focus of the study support programme in that school. Some schools also employed a study centre manager.

In some schools study support activities were evaluated through the normal line management meetings of senior and middle management at which the co-ordinators gave reports. In other schools review meetings were held, involving the co-ordinator and staff, who eva luated the activities and planned further developments. Most schools used student and staff surveys to monitor the activities on a termly or annual basis while others used a database that recorded gender, ethnicity, free school meal uptake and attendance at study support.

What were the main findings about study support?

The authors presented evidence to support their conclusion that study support had a value added effect on pupil achievement. The findings showed that for students participating in stud y support there were improvements in performance which were greater than for students who did not take part, when measured against baseline indicators. The authors identified improvements in a number of particular areas including:

- performance in national tests at Key Stage 3 and GCSE
- pupils' attitudes to school
- school attendance.

The authors reported that the attainment findings were consistent for all groups of students in all schools in the study. Assessment data suggested that for those who participated there was an improvement of three and a

half grades on pupils' best five GCSE results. Looked at another way, this was equivalent to one A - C pass more than for pupils of equal ability who did not take part.

Participation in study support had a favo urable effect on the attitudes to school shown by pupils. One indicator of this effect was the increased willingness to be involved in class activities on the part of Year 10 and 11 students. Participation in some form of study support had a positive effect on school attendance in all schools in the study.

These findings refer to outcomes averaged over the pupils who actually participated in the study support programme. Consequently the impact of study support at school level depended on the level of participation in the individual school.

Pupils' attainment

The research team used multiple regression analysis to investigate pupils' performance in national and GCSE examinations. They compared results for pupils who participated in study support with pupils of equal ability who did not participate, and identified improvements including:

- an overall improvement on pupils best five GCSE scores or number of A* - C passes
- gains in English and mathematics GCSE scores in particular
- improvements in mathematics and science attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests.

The authors used Key Stage 3 national test scores as the base line measure for predicting attainment in GCSE examinations. The authors took into account background factors that included gender, ethnicity and economic status. They also allowed for the fact that the school a student attends also makes a difference - what the authors termed the school effect. Once all these factors had been quantified in their analysis, the authors found that pupils who participated in study support did better in their GCSE examinations than those who did not, in the following ways:

- an average gain of three and a half grades on pupils' best five GCSE results
- an average increase of one A* - C pass
- an average improvement in English and mathematics GCSE results of half a grade each.

Oaklands School in Tower Hamlets, for example, had seen a rise in the percentage of their students gaining five or more A* - C GCSE grades from 25 per cent in 1998 to 40 per cent in 2000. An Ofsted report on the school had identified well attended study support activities as a major contributor to development of pupils' enjoyment of learning and to the raising of standards. At Hampstead School in Camden, GCSE results had also improved .The percentage of students achieving five or more passes at grade C or above was 36 per cent in 1992 increasing to 48 per cent in 2000.

The authors identified those forms of study support that were most effective in improving GCSE performances.

The authors also looked at the effect of study support on Key Stage 3 national tests but point out that the small size of this cohort made it necessary to treat these findings with more caution. They found that the most widespread form of study support used was subject focused and that this had raised mathematics and science attainment by one half and three-quarters of a level respectively. There had been no significant impact on English scores.

Effect on attainment at whole school level

Reassuringly the authors found that the impact of study support at whole school level depended on the participation rate of students in the school concerned.

The levels of participation ranged from small numbers of students to almost 100 per cent participation. Where

levels of participation were low, unsurprisingly, there was little whole school effect. On the other hand the schools where participation was very high, also showed low effects at whole school level. In these schools the ethos of study support seems to have permeated all teaching and learning activities so that benefits accrued to all pupils.

One headteacher, from St. Kentigern's School, West Lothian, explained:

'I think study support is part of the ethos we have here - that every child is special, regardless of ability or whatever... I think it sends out important messages to parents and the children - that we are really interested in them and are trying to develop strategies to prove that.'

Decisions to participate in these circumstances became more a matter of preference rather than a decision made to meet specific needs.

Attitudes of pupils

According to the authors, participation in study support, particularly in Year 11, had a significant effect on improving attitudes to school and learning. They reported a number of findings including:

- participation in Year 10 study support correlated with improvements in participation in learning activities in school and with raising academic self-esteem
- participation in Year 11 study support activities correlated with both the features shown in Year 10 and with improvements in:
- school-work
- ethos
- awareness of the utilitarian purposes of learning
- girls' attitudes showed greater improvements than those of boys in respect of schoolwork, ethos, utilitarian purposes and academic selfesteem, but not of participation in learning situations.

Effects on pupils' attendance in school

The authors found that:

- study support correlated with improved attendance at school, particularly among Year 11 pupils
- improvements in attendance occurred in all the schools
- raised attendance levels were not dependent on students' backgrounds.

The authors recognised the strong possibility that students who participate in study support may also be good attendees at school generally. For this reason they compared attendance levels of the students with those from an earlier stage of their school career, using Year 9 attendance as a baseline.

They concluded that the effect of study support was to increase attendance rates by two to three per cent for those who participated in study support compared to those who did not.

What effect did different kinds of study support have?

The authors found that:

- subject focused activities had an impact not only on attainment but also on attitudes and attendance
- sports, aesthetic activities, peer education and drop-in provision had an effect on attainment as well as on attitudes and attendance.

Subject focused study support

This type of study support correlated with improvements in best five GCSE grades, number of A - C passes in the GCSE exams, maths GCSE and English GCSE, in all schools.

Drop-in study support

Drop-in provision correlated with best five GCSE grades and number of A - C passes in many schools. It also correlated with improvements in academic self-esteem in all schools.

The authors also noted that schools with high rates of participation in drop-in provision had high overall participation rates in study support.

Sport, aesthetic activities and peer education

The authors found that in many schools participation in sport and aesthetic activities correlated with improvements in the attitudes and achievement of students.

Evidence indicated possible reasons for the effectiveness of aesthetic activities:

'The students said that drama helped them to learn how to work together, improved their communication skills, improved their confidence, and built their relationship with teachers, all of which helped their GCSE's. They felt that the confidence they gained from the drama productions helped them in their other lessons.' (Observation from Royal Docks Community School, Newham)

Many of the students who undertook peer support for younger students achieved higher grades in English GCSE, and improved attendance.

What did students like about study support?

Using evidence from students, teachers and other adults involved in study support led the authors to identify a number of features which students liked about study support and which contributed to its effectiveness including:

- it was voluntary
- it was learner-centred
- students (and teachers) experienced a greater sense of control
- there was a more relaxed and informal relationship between teachers and students
- it provided a sociable learning environment
- it fostered independent learning
- there was a range of resources for learning
- there was an ethos of achievement.

The fact that it was voluntary was most consistently emphasised in discussions with students and staff. Students appeared to enjoy choosing to go to study support. The authors suggested that having the option to choose empowered students and was likely to increase their self-esteem. One student, from Sarah Bonnell School, Newham, reflected the opinions of many others by commenting that:

'Because this isn't compulsory and you are here from your own free will, so you want to learn.'

Evidence showed that way in which study support focused on the pupils learning requirements was important to them. Many came to study support because they wished to learn something specific or to achieve a target. In the words of one Year 11 student from Willows High School, Cardiff:

'You can sort it out there and then at school.'

They also enjoyed being able to work at their own pace and being able to choose who to work with.

'It's a place to work with your friends. You can work at your own pace and it is different from the

classroom...' (Student, Oaklands School, Tower Hamlets)

On several occasions students stressed the importance of having control over their work in study support activities.

'It's not the teacher teaching us like at school. We do whatever we feel will help us.' (Student, Sarah Bonnell School, Newham)

This sense of maturity was recognised by other students, for example:

'I'm more mature, responsible... We've all become more grown-up.' (Student, Yardley School, Birmingham)

Closely related to choice and control was teacher-student relationships. Without the formalities and constraints of the classroom, both teachers and students could relax more, and because students chose to attend, their teachers treated them more like adults. One student commented:

'They don't treat us like pupils and they don't act like teachers.' (Student, Broadgreen Community Comprehensive School, Liverpool)

What did schools do to promote study support?

Schools which were successful in achieving high rates of participation by their students paid particular attention to three main factors:

- accessibility and breadth of provision
- responsiveness to students' needs and wishes
- marketing.

Whilst the evidence showed that accessibility of provision was a factor in promoting study support, it was not something that schools could always do something about. For example, attendance at 'after school activities' was difficult for some pupils because they lived some distance from school and getting home afterwards was a problem.

The researchers found that schools with high levels of participation were characterised by lively programmes and a school culture in which the idea of study support was accepted as a natural part of school life.

What was the peer effect and was it overcome?

The authors found that students and teachers were well aware of the influence of the peer group on participation in study support. Many students clearly appreciated the calmer atmosphere provided by study support activities:

'It's a place to work with your friends... There's no disruption.' (Student, Oaklands School, Tower Hamlets)

'People want to be there, so there's no messing around.' (Student, Byng Kenrick Central School, Birmingham)

There was evidence that even when the rest of the peer group were negative in their attitude to study support, the school ethos was such that many pupils were confident enough to become involved in the activities. Students at Oaklands School, Tower Hamlets were aware of an 'anti-boff' culture in some quarters but seemed to be confident in coping with it. One student said:

'Yes, some kids say that, but it doesn't bother me.'

There was also evidence that some students, who had been at odds with their school, were willing to become

participants in out-of-school-hours activities as the following example shows. The research team that investigated the Shireland Language College in Sandwell, noted:

'One Year 10 student who mentored in the science sessions was a student known by the school as someone who regularly played truant and did not enjoy school. However, she made the effort to attend the after-school sessions as a mentor.'

In the opinion of the headteacher of Campion Catholic High School the negative peer effect had been overcome:

'There are lots of kids who don't care now about peer pressure... There are children in the study centre who wouldn't have been there three or four years ago. It's becoming habitual. It's being seen as somewhere to go.'

Support for this view came from evidence from the school indicating that holiday study support had attracted about 40 per cent of Year 11 students.

How did study support contribute to a learning culture?

Schools promoted study support fo r a range of reasons including:

- improving students' self-esteem and motivation
- raising achievement, particularly at Key Stage 4
- introducing good learning strategies and study skills to Key Stage 3 children
- broadening the experience of the students
- staff development.

The authors identified three types of effects of study support that helped schools build a learning culture:

- direct
- indirect
- cumulative.

Direct effects

Direct effects were most clearly shown by the impact of:

- Easter revision schools
- subject focused support in Year 11.

One student from Royal Docks Community School, Newham, commented:

'You get more individual help from the teachers. If you're not sure about things you can ask for extra help from the teacher.'

Another student, from Shirelands Language College, remarked on how useful this had been:

'I'd never realised that there are different ways of revising other than reading information off the page.'

Indirect effects

Activities which had indirect effects included:

- sport
- aesthetic activities
- peer education

- other activities such as Duke of Edinburgh Award, school clubs and societies.

Indirect effects were also demonstrated when an activity aimed at improving one outcome had the effect of improving another, different, one. For example, the authors found that subject focused support had the effect of helping to improve school attendance.

Cumulative effects

The research evidence showed that study support in Year 10 had measurable effects on attainment, attitudes and attendance in Year 11.

The authors also observed that participation in Year 11 study support activities was influenced by participation in study support in earlier years.

What did teachers gain by participating in study support?

The authors concluded that staff gained the opportunity to work with students free from the pressures of classroom management. They reported that study support seemed to offer staff the possibility of experimenting with different learning styles in a safe context and gave staff the cha nce to work outside subject responsibilities, drawing on skills and knowledge not normally connected to their day-today teaching role. An English teacher helped a student with geography work, a science teacher helped to run the folk club and a maths teacher ran extra-curricular classes in Spanish. A science teacher who taught an English course commented:

'...I don't often get to teach an English class. So, this is in a different light - much more relaxed, much less driven by the curriculum. There is much more one-to-one support, the sessions are more interactive and the pupils are relaxed. We have designed it like that with open dialogue and emphasising fun.'

Many staff seemed to find participation rewarding and invigorating. One teacher made the revealing comment:

'What I can do in study support is what I originally came into teaching for.'

In drop-in sessions there was the potential for a significant shift in the relationship between teacher and learner. Here the teacher was able to see students' work across a range of subjects, something that they are unlikely to experience in the course of their usual teaching experience. This allowed them the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how students tackle their work, what they struggle with and how they respond to setbacks.

How were teachers involved in study support?

Teachers became involved in study support by various routes across the 12 case study schools. Broad Green Community High School in Liverpool, for example, ran a compressed timetable which ended at 2.10 pm. There was then an expectation that staff would participate in study support. At Oaklands School in Tower Hamlets, all staff were asked to use 20 hours of their directed time per year for study support. In general, where directed time was light, there was an expectation that staff would run or help to run study support activities.

Staff in all schools were made aware of the school's policy on study support and open invitations to participate were made by the headteacher or senior management.

In some schools no teachers were paid, whilst in others payment depended on the type of activity. Teachers who ran activities that were part of a centrally organised study support provision, or were held in holiday times and at weekends, were usually paid.

Several schools adopted a team-based approach to the staffing of study support. For example, Oaklands School held a weekly study support session staffed by a group of six teachers and, at Sarah Bonnell School, the study hall was overseen by a group of teachers on a rota basis.

What sort of activities went on in study support?

Evidence from the case study schools showed a wide range of study support activities for which there was always an overall co-ordinator. The activities can be broadly characterised into the following groups:

- dedicated study centres and clubs designed for drop-in use
- subject based taught activities
- short courses on subjects and topics outside the usual curriculum taught or supervised by teachers or others
- long taught courses on subjects outside the curriculum but designed to enhance thinking skills
- specific study days arranged in holidays and sometimes at weekends, some of which were residential
- sports activities
- aesthetic activities
- school community activities.

All the case study schools had some sort of study centre. Typical of many of the study centres observed in the case study schools, was the study support centre at Hampstead School, Camden. These centres usually had a manager and, in some cases, ICT support staff. A small team of peer tutors often supported the managers. The centres were opening for as few as one afternoon a week or as many as five. Some of them were opening before school and at lunchtimes too.

Specific study days were popular with schools and students. For an illustration showing how one school made effective use of study days see case study 2, Byng Kenrick School, Birmingham. Study days took many forms and were aimed at different year groups and for different purposes. Broad Green School in Liverpool put on 'study Sundays' for Year 11 revision, booster courses for Year 10 and Year 9 Saturdays. The Year 11 'study Sundays' were very well supported and the students particularly enjoyed the fact that the courses were held in a hotel.

Hampstead High School in Camden arranged Easter revision sessions that attracted over 100 Year 11 students. These activities were subject-based with an introduction that covered topics such as:

- learning and thinking skills
- timing of revision
- parental and family issues affecting revision
- where to do revision.

In many of the schools the study support co-ordinators were keen to establish taught or supervised courses that gave students the opportunities to try activities they would not normally meet in the cur riculum. This approach was a particular feature of Oaklands School, Tower Hamlets that aimed to build the confidence of their students. The school organised short courses in a range of activities including journalism, soccer studies and thinking skills. Two other schools which adopted this approach were Hampstead School, Camden (French e-mail club) and Swanshurst School (helping to help yourself).

Some schools encouraged older students to act as peer supporters for younger pupils. One example was Broad Green School where sixth formers helped run the after school study support centre. Another example was Oaklands School that organised a reading scheme for Year 6 pupils from feeder schools in which Year 7 pupils acted as peer supporters.

What else did the study highlight?

The authors identified two other study support effects. They were the impacts on:

- students from minority ethnic groups
- disadvantaged students.

When the authors analysed the effects of study support on white, black and Asian students they found that it had twice as much effect for students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The effect corresponds to an improvement of two grades, in the best five GCSE grades, of black and Asian students who participated in study support compared to white students who participated. The authors also examined the interplay of gender and ethnicity. They found that among all the ethnic groups studied, those who added most to their best five GCSE scores were Asian girls and those who improved their attainment least were white boys. The forms of study support that appeared to have the biggest effect were subject focused and drop-in.

The research also showed that study support benefited those students in receipt of free school meals slightly more than those who were not on free school meals. The effect worked out at an improvement of one level in their best five GCSE grades, and this appeared to come from Year 11 subject support.

How was the research designed?

The design selected incorporated a range of activities including:

- collecting baseline measures of attainment attitudes and attendance
- gathering student background data such as gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status
- revisiting students after almost three years to assess progress against predicted or normative standards
- comparing value added effects between study support participants and non-participants
- joint recording of observations made during visits by 'critical friends' (from the National Evaluation and Development programme) and study support co-ordinators
- case study observations recorded by NFER and create consultants in autumn 1999 and spring 2000
- self-evaluative case studies
- authentic voice interviews carried out by 'critical friends'.

Baseline data were provided by 51 'partner' schools, using a student sample that consisted of:

- the whole 1997 Year 9 cohort in 45 schools (senior cohort)
- the whole 1997 Year 7 cohort in 11 schools (junior cohort).

Five of the schools provided data on both cohorts.

The initial information collected included:

- student background data (free school meal take up, dates of birth, gender and ethnicity)
- assessment data (non verbal reasoning test scores for both cohorts plus Key Stage 3 national test results for the senior cohort)
- attitudinal data
- school attendance figures.

During the period of the study the research team annually collected participation rate data. Output data consisted of:

- examination results (Key Stage national tests and GCSE)
- attitudinal data
- school attendance figures.
- Student attitude data were collected using the NFER Student attitude inventory 'you and your school' developed for the National Commission on Education (NFER, 1993). This consists of 69 questions covering students' attitudes to:
- school
- to school work
- rules and school discipline
- teachers
- activities outside lesson time
- plans about the future.

Attendance data were recorded as single percentage figures for each student with authorised absence being treated simply as absence.

To complement the data from the 51 partner schools a second set of data sources was used. 'Critical friends' visited a number of schools conducting group interviews with participating and non-participating students and with staff. NFER working with create consultants carried out case studies in the first and final terms of the study in 12 schools. Group interviews were conducted with about eight Year 11 students in each of the twelve case study schools. Over 150 students and 60 staff were interviewed altogether.

Who participated in the study?

Two cohorts of students were tracked for three years. A total of approximately 8,000 students were involved:

- approximately 6,000 students from Years 9 to 11
- approximately 2,000 students from Years 7 to 9
- 51 secondary schools designated as the 'partner' schools by the authors
- 85 (mainly secondary) schools and other centres described by the authors as 'associates'.
- All the partner schools were comprehensives, either maintained or voluntary aided, or their Scottish or Welsh equivalents. Of the 51 schools:
- the majority (34 out of 51) were 11-16 mixed
- 17 schools had sixth forms of which three were high schools with intake at Year 9
- four schools were girls only
- one school was for boys only.

Of the 51 partner schools involved in the study the majority came from urban and inner city centres, whilst two came from more rural areas of Scottish counties. The authors characterised the schools as serving disadvantaged populations on the basis of free school meal numbers. The levels of free school meal take up in the partner schools ranged from 10 to 81 per cent with over half the schools being in the 50 to 69 per cent bracket, (for comparison, the national average in 1997 was 17 per cent and Ofsted described 32 per cent as 'severe').

Prior to the start of the study the range of percentages of students gaining five or more GCSE grades in the summer 1997 examinations was 2 to 56 per cent. However, four out of five schools reported fewer than 30 per cent of students achieving those grades.

The proportion of ethnic minority children varied considerably from over 80 per cent in the London boroughs of Newham and Tower Hamlets, to almost none in a small number of schools including those in Scotland.

Whilst the associate study support centres consisted almost entirely of secondary schools a small number of public libraries and youth projects were included in the study.

How did the authors identify the value added by study support?

The authors used multiple regression analysis to process the data. In practice this involved finding out how different factors such as type of study support, gender and family economic status affected pupil performance. The authors measured these factors by, for example, researching the best five GCSE grades. By analysing such relationships the authors identified those types of study support that had the greatest effects on the attainment, attitudes and attendance of students.

Whilst suggesting the usefulness of multiple regression analysis, the authors did acknowledge the limitations of the approach in that it only provided correlation not explanation. It did not deal with causes but rested on a statistical methodology that quantified all the variables including attainment, attitude, attendance and social background. The authors undertook repeated analyses of the data with different sub-sets of the sample and hence showed that correlation levels were similar; a fact which increased their confidence that the correlation reflected underlying causal relationships.

Implications for practice

Teachers may wish to consider the following implications of the findings of this research:

- The voluntary nature of additional study support attracted a wide range of students, including some who were otherwise disengaged from school. Students and staff appreciated the more relaxed, discursive, adult atmosphere of interactive learning. Could any aspects of out of school learning, such as learning through discussion with peers, be used to promote learning within the classroom, too?
- Students attending study support gained in self-esteem and became more resilient to 'anti-school' messages from peers. Could sports, aesthetic and other, non-subject based extra-curricular provision help to build a more pro-learning culture for students who are vulnerable to peer pressure?
- The study found that teachers not only enjoyed the calmer, more sociable ethos within drop-in and other provision for study support, but that the sessions provided them with a safe context in which to experiment with different teaching and learning approaches. Could you build on this to promote your own professional development? To what extent might you share your learning with colleagues in this context?

Head teachers and senior staff may wish to consider the following:

- Although a few teachers were paid for running out of school learning, much of the work depended on staff goodwill. How do you communicate to individual teachers who contribute to out of school learning that their efforts are recognised and appreciated?
- The take-up of study skill provision by students was determined by issues such as accessibility, breadth of provision, responsiveness to student's needs and good marketing! Could any of these factors be improved in your school? How could you extend and use your community links to improve provision of out-of-school-hours services to students?
- Students from ethnic minority groups and those taking free school meals made strong improvements in their grades at GCSE as a result of attending study support, but some did not attend because of transport difficulties. If lack of transport prevents some groups of students at your school from attending after-school study support, might any local businesses sponsor a bus service? Could links with leaders of local ethnic communities prove fruitful in boosting attendance?

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Case studies

The first four of the five case studies were all linked to the main study. They have been included here to illustrate the wide variety of approaches to studysupport and to offer some detailed examples of how study-support was organised in the schools involved in the research.

The fifth and final case study is taken from 'Playing for success' an initiative launched by the DfES in partnership with professional football clubs and LEAs. The initiative was evaluated by a research team from NFER (Caroline Sharp, Jenny Blackmore, Lesley Kendall, Ian Schagen, Keith Mason and Katherine O'Connor) and the information presented is taken from the evaluation.

Byng Kenrick Central School, Birmingham

This case study described activities that were designed to introduce a different type of learning experience to students.

Byng Kenrick is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive with a student population of 906. The school serves a substantially deprived neighbourhood on the outskirts of Birmingham and 40 per cent of students qualified for free school meals. About 30 per cent of students came from families that do not have an employed adult. Whilst the majority of students are white working class, about 10 per cent of students came from Afro-Caribbean or Asian backgrounds. Only 18 per cent of the intake has reading ages at or above their chronological age. The main aim of the study support programme was to boost the performance of students during Key Stage 4.

The main strategy for introducing a different kind of learning experience involved a taught programme of study support based in the extended learning centre at the school and run with support and guidance from the University of the First Age. The strategy had two main components:

- summer schools
- after school courses.

The summer schools were 25 hours long, key skills based, residential activities. They were designed for different age ranges from Year 6 to Year 10 students. The 1999-2000 programme for Year 9 students was based around the theme 'murder mystery' and was cross-curricular. Students' skills were developed through calculations of bullet size, speed and trajectory and the writing of a forensic report. The Year 10 programme's theme was 'hunt the loot' and included a two -day residential. The wo rk focused on areas of their courses that the students found difficult, such as problem-solving, French translations and simultaneous equations.

Another feature of the taught programme was a series of ten weekly after school sessions run by a Ph.D. student of philosophy from a local university. Eight Year 11 students attended a session of 'free will'. The session was developed in a way that encouraged the students to participate. The lecturer asked students questions designed to make them reflect on their own experiences, such as 'why do we act in certain ways?' and 'why do we do some things and not others?' The ensuing exchanges between the lecturer and the students, and between the students themselves, took on the character of a metacognitive exercise, as students were drawn into reflecting on what they had said and why they said it. There was a relaxed and informal flow to the session and whilst some of the discussion had become quite complex, the students were clearly stimulated by the process. One of the participants observed:

"It broadens your opinions, it's extending your awareness... It makes you think 'What if?'"

When interviewed about what they had gained from study support, students gave a list of skills they felt they had developed, including improvements in:

- problem-solving
- learning to work as a team
- ICT skills
- learning strategies.

One student remarked that she had had her eyes opened to other ways in which she could enhance her learning, such as visualisation techniques, relaxation and drawing up a realistic revision timetable.

Another activity that featured strongly at the school concerned the involvement of peer tutors in programme delivery. Forty students from Years 11 to 13 worked with the study support co-ordinator within the taught programme. On one occasion they helped to run a module on thinking skills to Year 7 students and at another time they helped with a summer school. The students who undertook peer support each received the equivalent of two days training, based on the City and Guilds course in learning support, and the students will qualify for this certificate when their training is complete.

Hampstead School, Camden

This case study described activities that aimed to:

- enable students to improve basic skills so they could access the curriculum successfully (eg. numeracy, literacy, ICT)
- extend learning by building on what students do in school (eg, revision, support, subject clubs)
- enrich learning by giving students opportunities to do new things (eg, dance, electronics, cinema).

Hampstead School is an 11-18 multi-ethnic comprehensive with 1,300 students including 250 in the sixth form. It is situated on the edge of the London Borough of Camden. The socio-economic backgrounds of the students are such that the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. More than 50 per cent of the students came from homes in which English is not the first language. Whilst 59 per cent of the students were white, among the remaining students no fewer than 78 different languages were spoken.

The initial impetus towards study support arose from the school's concern to create a community of independent learners. In common with all the case study schools Hampstead had its own study support centre that acted as the foundation of the study support programme. The centre was open from 8.00 am until 5.00 pm each day. It was extremely popular with students, who were attracted by the high quality computers, so that a booking system for the computers was necessary.

The school had a well-developed range of enrichment activities that included:

- jewellery club, which gave students the opportunity to work with silver
- visual basic club which aimed to provide students with programming skills
- young investigators club, run by the science department which consisted of a series of investigations leading to a national certificate
- kumon (www.kumon.com/) mathematics course
- history club
- French e-mail club.

The French e-mail club ran once a week at lunchtime. One observed session was attended by twelve boys and three girls, from Years 9 and 10. The teacher was assisted by an ICT technician, an essential requirement to help students cope with technical problems. Most of the students were observed writing e-mails in a mixture of French and English, a few wrote in English only. One very able girl wrote entirely in French. Another girl, who had originally joined the club knowing very little French was now described by the teacher as competent. The girl explained that she was writing to a French girl about her favourite books (*Harry Potter*, *The Hobbit* and others). The teacher helped the children to improve their letters and the students helped each other. Regular two-way communication appeared to be a major motivating factor.

Oaklands School, Tower Hamlets

This case study showed how study support can broaden education to include the world outside school.

Oaklands is a small 11-16 mixed comprehensive in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, with a student population of 585. Ofsted characterised the school (in 1998), as having an intake in which there was a well above average number of students with low attainment and poor social circumstances. The school serves a mixed area of white and Bangladeshi residents, 53 per cent of students spoke English as an additional language and 69 per cent were eligible for free school meals.

The school had developed a wide variety of study support activities including:

- study centre which opened every Wednesday
- short courses
-
- mentoring scheme run in conjunction with a local football club
- peer support scheme.

The after school study centre attracted around 100 students per week during the autumn term of 1998-1999. Most of the students who attended were Bengali with a slight majority of boys. Not only did the register show

that younger students outnumbered older students, but also that the students who used the centre did so on a regular basis. In addition to the study centre, an ICT room, an art room and the library were available for the Wednesday afterschool study session. There was a tutor in charge with five or six other staff, usually two in each room, to offer support to the students. One observation showed all the computers in use and all the rooms full. Younger students mainly compiled information for projects whilst Year 10 and 11 students completed coursework tasks. Two highly competent Year 9 students helped out, saying that they fixed problems on the machines, installed programs and assisted students using the Internet. A teacher went to all the rooms checking the registers.

The themes of the short courses were chosen by the students themselves. During the autumn term of 1998-1999, 12 short courses were run in the study centre. Each course was eight weeks long, for two hours every week. The range of the courses was wide and varied and included the following:

- journalism
- first aid
- photography
- video-making
- Somerset thinking skills
- cognitive acceleration through science education (CASE)
- cognitive acceleration through maths education (CAME).

The teacher running the journalism group explained that the students did everything themselves, from writing and composition to layout. The class was organised around a small group of students with others who came and went each term. Describing her role the teacher said:

"I am less of an English teacher in these sessions. I let them write it. I don't want to have too much input."

During the course visits were organised to the Daily Mirror and the Children's Express newspapers. The students also interviewed staff at Sky TV via email, and appeared on a children's TV programme, an event they found particularly impressive.

The students were allowed considerable freedom in their choice of material. In one observed session, the teacher explained:

"Each week we talk about: 'What would your parents like to hear?' This week it is East End Characters and how the area has changed."

The 11 students spent the first part of the session collecting information about the Blitz, the Kray Twins, and the 'Elephant Man' that they then discussed together before going on to draft it. The teacher enjoyed the informal relationship she had with the group and the fact that the students could explore topics that went beyond the National Curriculum. The group observed was very enthusiastic and had developed a great deal of skill in finding and handling information.

Whilst the ethos of the study support programme is inclusive of all students, the programme does also target underachieving boys. One initiative set up with this aim was a short course that involved a mentoring link with Leyton Orient Football Club. An hour of soccer themed work was matched by an hour of professional coaching.

Another example of an activity designed to enhance the self-confidence of students while involving the students in the outside community was a peer support course. This involved Year 7 students from Oaklands working on a reading scheme with Year 6 students from local primary feeder schools.

Swanshurst Secondary School, Birmingham

This case study illustrated activities aimed at enhancing self-esteem and confidence.Swanshurst is a girls' secondary school with a student population of 1,700, 200 of whom are in the sixth form. It serves a large urban catchment area in Birmingham and draws on 60 feeder schools. Almost half the students were of South-East Asian background with the remainder consisting largely of white students with smaller numbers of other ethnic minority groups including African-Caribbean. Within the school population 61 per cent of students spoke English as an additional language and 36 per cent of students qualified for free school meals.

This is a relatively high attaining school in that the percentage of students gaining five or more A*-C GCSE passes has been around the 50 per cent mark over recent years. The school was recently awarded 'beacon' status. In May 2000 Ofsted remarked on the range and richness of the study support programme at the school. The report also commented that over half of the students at the school participated in study support and that participation in study support showed a good correlation with GCSE performance.

The study support co-ordinator gave four main reasons for the schools' interest in maintaining a comprehensive study support programme, which included:

- raising students' self-esteem and motivation
- improving achievement in GCSE performance
- introducing good learning strategies and study skills to Year 7 students
- giving staff the opportunity to develop themselves.

Many of the study support activities were held in the school's extended learning centre. About sixty enthusiastic students took part in a 'bookstatic' event. The main providers for this activity were two English teachers with two other teachers assisting them. This session was the first of a series of five.

The event involved a competition between teams of students on the theme of children's literature. There were several rounds, each round focusing on a different activity. In the first round children had to identify books from descriptions read out to them. Later, the students had to identify as true or false statements, such as "To be or not to be' is a line from MacBeth?' and 'Oliver Twist's friend is called the Artful Dodger?' Teachers collected students' written responses and kept a running score on a whiteboard.

The 'helping you to help yourself' course was designed to improve the confidence and self-esteem of Year 7 girls identified as being either, withdrawn and quiet, or having difficulty in mixing with others students. The course was a drama based activity run by a science teacher, with the assistance of two other teachers. It consisted of two one and a half hour sessions each week for nine consecutive weeks. In one session the 15 participants learnt the characteristics of living things, using actions to help them remember the processes involved. For example, movement was accompanied by a little dance and for nutrition students made eating sounds and actions. The students appeared to greatly enjoy the task and took part enthusiastically. The lead teacher explained that she hoped to raise the selfesteem of the girls by making them more aware of their own behaviour and helping them become more familiar with teachers and with school life. She felt that students who attended her course had become more confident, asked more questions at school and were less nervous.

DfES research report no. 337 'Playing for success: an evaluation of the third year'

This study reported on the evaluation of 'playing for success', a national initiative established by the DfES in partnership with the FA Premier League, the Nationwide League and their clubs, and LEAs. This initiative aimed to contribute to the raising of educational standards in urban areas by developing study support centres in professional clubs. Experienced teachers managed the centres and the programme was designed to improve the attitudes and motivation of underachieving young people from Years 6 to 9. In 2000-1 there were 35 such study support centres taking over 12,600 students from 710 schools. A common pattern of provision was for

centres to take students for 20 hours over a period of ten weeks. The centres used the medium and environment of football to support study in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Feedback form the centres indicated that the courses were extremely well received, with over 90 per cent of students who attended regarding them to be 'fun', 'interesting' and 'a good idea for me'. Most students attended over 80 per cent of the course, despite the fact that the sessions were held after school and the courses received widespread parental support.

The evaluation was based on responses from 2,095 students, 598 parents and 107 teachers. For each measure used to assess progress, students' performance was compared with that of a control group of 349 similar students who did not attend. Evidence was collected from students, parents and schools in a number of ways including:

- attitude questionnaires
- ICT self-report questionnaires
- nationally standardised tests of numeracy and reading comprehension.

The authors of the study reported that the initiative contributed to improved achievement in a number of ways, including:

- gains in numeracy of 18 months for Key Stage 2 students and 14 months for Key Stage 3 students, on average
- Key Stage 2 students reading comprehension scores improved by the equivalent of 15 months
- all students showed improvements in their ICT skills, especially in their ability to operate a computer, word process, use e-mail and navigate the Internet.

The gains in numeracy brought the performance of these students, who had been underachieving, much closer to the level expected for their age. Whilst primary students reading comprehension improved significantly when compared with the control group, the progress of the secondary students did not quite reach statistical significance.

Parents and teachers noticed improvements in attitudes, which were also highlighted by the students' responses to the a ttitude questionnaire. Parents were particularly pleased by their children's changes in attitude. One parent said:

"Jack has learnt that in a well-disciplined, caring environment, he is quite capable of learning. ...His confidence has developed tremendously...it has definitely changed his attitude. ...He talks a lot more about school."

Another parent commented:

"Stef found learning an enjoyment which I think is important. ... Stef enjoyed every activity..."

The report contained examples of the actual work done in some of the centres. One centre manager explained:

"We use the ground and staff as a learning tool when possible, eg, to interview club staff, such as the Press Officer, on their role in the club. We do ground tours, measure the pitch, use a questionnaire on pitch adverts and do map-work around the ground."

Another said:

"...All tasks and activities have a football theme eg, Football Challenge, acrostic name poem of a player

including similes and alliteration...we carry out oral literacy and numeracy tasks. All students get to meet at least one first team player."

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Further reading

What else might I enjoy reading?

DfES (1998) Extending opportunity: a national framework for study support. London: DfES.
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/816987/817959/extopp.pdf

Morgan, A. and Hall, R., (1999) Study support: a code of practice for the primary sector. London: DfES

MacBeath, J. (1997) Study support: the code of practice. London: DfES.
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/816987/cop.PDF

Where can I find out more online?

DCSF: Research
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/

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Appraisal

Robustness

Study support is a complex and under-researched area. This robust evaluative study is concerned with the effectiveness of out-of-school-hours learning activities. A rather broad definition of study support, which included aesthetic and sporting activities as well as pedagogic ones, was used. The research team studied the impact of such activities in a large number of schools using a range of data sources including pupil records, interviews, observations, monitoring records, and assessment data. Data was collected by two different groups of researchers that enabled the authors to triangulate the evidence. The research team investigated pupil and teacher perceptions, attitudes, relationships, participation rates, pupil attendance and learning outcomes using multiple regression analysis. Outcomes were correlated with gender, and ethnic and social background as well as study support. Twelve case study schools provided detailed insights into what went on during the activities and illustrative material from them is presented. Whilst reports from these schools are not included in the main study directions are given to enable readers to locate them.

Relevance

Recent expectations of parents, school governors and government about the raising of academic standards have helped to stimulate schools' interest in making more use of the time available for learning, by using time outside normal school hours. Although as always it is not possible to generalise from the experiences of pupils and teachers described in the report, the case studies do provide illustrative examples of what worked i n particular contexts. The case study sites are schools with which teachers will readily identify and the evidence they provide will be credible to teachers in all types of schools and in all phases.

Applicability

The study clearly focuses on the contribution study support can make to raising the achievement of pupils. Whilst the main report is predominantly a summary document describing and explaining findings with some illustrative material, the case studies do present a range of interesting and lively examples to show what went

on. Teachers will find these informative and potentially useful not just in out-of-school-hours learning situations, but in mainstream classrooms as well.

Writing

The language and terminology make this report accessible to teachers. Most of the technical data is contained in appendices at the back of the study, which readers will find helpful although some of the data are difficult to interpret. The case study reports are very clearly structured and reader friendly.
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