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Key lessons for tackling educational disadvantage
Excellence for Everyone: Impact Evaluation Report
July 2022

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Executive Summary

Evidence shows that narrowing of the educational disadvantage gap was stalling prior to the Covid-19 pandemic[1], and the initial lockdown had a greater impact on disadvantaged pupils than non-disadvantaged pupils, with the gap widening by Autumn 2020[2].

The Excellence for Everyone (EfE) programme is designed to deliver transformational support for disadvantaged pupils, helping schools to challenge the link between poverty and poor outcomes and provide outstanding professional development to school staff.

Previously the programme was delivered through trained lead schools across the Challenge Partners' network. Given the pressing challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, and supported by the Permira Foundation, Challenge Partners redeveloped the EfE resources as an online toolkit available at no fee to partner schools. The toolkit aims to support schools to understand evidence around the disadvantage gap, and critically evaluate how this can be used or applied in their own schools and unique contexts.

Following this change in the programme's delivery, Challenge Partners commissioned ImpactEd (again funded by the Permira Foundation) to evaluate the impact of EfE on tackling the disadvantage gap. Challenge Partners' hubs in Knowsley, Portsmouth and Herts and Bucks delivered the new form of the programme and contributed to this evaluation. Using a mixed methods approach, the evaluation combined baseline, midpoint and final surveys for pupils with in-depth qualitative research school staff involved in delivery of the programme at six schools.

Both programme delivery and evaluation implementation were significantly hampered by ongoing challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular in relation to school staff capacity and pupil and teacher absence. This means that sample sizes are smaller than originally planned. However, the research still presents a number of useful lessons regarding schools' implementation of the programme and its perceived impact.

With these limitations in mind, this report focuses on insights on intervention design and delivery gathered by the qualitative research, using quantitative survey data and other metrics to supplement this where possible. Accepting these limitations, **this report provides some useful lessons around how to approach the challenge of narrowing the disadvantage gap and highlights the challenges that schools have continued to face in 2021/22** despite their commitments and endeavours in this area.

The key findings are as follows:

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[1] Education Policy Institute, August 2020. Education in England: Annual Report 2020.

[2] National Foundation for Educational Research, March 2022. The Impact of Covid-19 on pupil attainment - a summary of research evidence

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Outcomes for schools and staff

► Staff members' definitions of 'disadvantage' broadened as a result of the EfE programme, with particular impact on how pupils are selected for support. Staff involved in the programme now think about their pupils' development and barriers to learning in a more bespoke manner and expected this would be a long-term change.

► Intervention design and implementation quality were positively affected by the programme. These was a particular benefit on ensuring targeted support was embedded in a sustainable way that could be scaled beyond small initial cohorts.

► School staff involved in programme delivery valued the in-person training sessions facilitated by knowledgeable practitioners. Wider school staff also benefited from access to EfE resources, and it was anticipated that the programme would lead to more research-informed approaches being used in schools going forward.

► All schools involved in the research intended to continue rolling out the programme in some form in the future.

► Staff found that high levels of collaboration internally to deliver the programme within their school was an enabler of success. Through EfE programme sessions, they benefited from opportunities to collaborate and share ideas, learnings and findings.

Outcomes for pupils

Although our analysis of outcomes for pupils was limited by the small sample size collected, key trends included:

► At primary stage, pupils saw an increase in metacognition, self-efficacy and grit between baseline and mid-point surveys, with particularly sustained increases in self-efficacy.

► At secondary stage, there was a more varied picture, with decreases in all three measures from baseline to midpoint surveys. However, none of these results were statistically significant so may represent natural variation.

► Similar to the national average, there was a lower starting point for Pupil Premium pupils in these non-cognitive outcomes than for their peers.

► Across key stages, school staff involved in qualitative research reported greater increases in working at grade and standardised tests for participating pupils than their peers. This data is based on self-reports.

Key lessons for schools

Based on the research, key lessons which could benefit schools participating in the programme, or schools implementing initiatives to tackle the disadvantage gap more generally, are:

▶ Start to set up the programmes related to tackling disadvantage for the next academic year in the summer term prior to starting delivery; for instance, selecting pupils who would participate, and making the pupils, their parents and wider school staff aware of the programme

▶ Ensure multiple staff members across different roles are involved in delivery of the programme, and that staff involved are committed to what the programme involves

▶ Ensuring that the focus and scale of the programme is manageable for delivery, and scale up over time rather than being too ambitious at the outset

▶ Maintain the regularity of interventions by having a set timetable and consistent allocated staff, and prioritise time for the interventions to take place by finding times that will consistently work well for interventions within the school day to ensure they regularly take place

▶ Use resources or schemes of learning that the school already has available where possible, or ensure there is time for staff to plan and prepare new interventions where needed

▶ Communicate with parents by sharing pupils' targets with parents at the outset and providing regular monitoring updates

▶ Disseminate information about the programme, its purpose and which pupils are participating across the school to maintain a high profile of target pupils and the programme across school

▶ Ensure staff across the school have access to relevant resources, and disseminate learning from training sessions and delivery to wider year groups or whole school staff where appropriate

▶ Ensure there is an effective system in place for evaluation, with clearly targeted outcomes and mechanisms to measure change for targeted pupils.

The report illustrates these lessons, and showcases how schools continued to work towards addressing educational disadvantage during a period of ongoing pandemic disruption. Throughout, findings are accompanied by 'prompts for practitioners' to encourage reflection on how these insights may or may not inform practice in your setting.

1. Introduction

The Excellence for Everyone (EfE) programme is designed to deliver transformational support for disadvantaged pupils, helping schools to challenge the link between poverty and poor outcomes and provide outstanding professional development to school staff.

Previously the programme was delivered through trained lead schools across the Challenge Partners' network. Given the pressing challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, and supported by the Permira Foundation, Challenge Partners redeveloped the EfE resources as an online toolkit available at no fee to partner schools. The toolkit aims to support schools to understand evidence around the disadvantage gap, and critically evaluate how this can be used or applied in their own schools and unique contexts.

The toolkit of resources sets out a curriculum of workshop sessions providing opportunity for collaboration and development for a Challenge Partners' hub. To run a complete programme schools organise themselves, naming a lead facilitator or school who takes on the leadership, management and delivery of the programme. Alternatively, the resources can serve as standalone workshops to supplement a school's CPD schedule, focused on the themes of academic success, resilience and self-awareness for pupils. The resources are designed so that hubs can adapt the programme to meet the needs of their schools.

Schools involved in a complete workshop programme also undertake an in-school impact project. This project is delivered alongside the workshop sessions back in their school. School teams plan and implement targeted strategies and monitor the impact of these strategies through analysis of a target cohort. The in-school project is launched to schools at the beginning of the programme.

Excellence for Everyone (EfE) ultimately aims to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils in their school's context through:

> ► **Developing capacity at all levels:** each school sends a team made up of a leader, teacher(s) and teaching assistant(s) to workshops

> ► **Being evidence-informed:** the focus is on research-based, high impact strategies to support disadvantaged pupils

> ► **Starting small, scaling fast:** from an initial focus on 15 pupils (Target Cohort) schools develop a whole school approach to narrowing gaps and improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

> ► **Enabling school-to-school collaboration:** EfE develops cross-school relationships, providing opportunities to share and develop best practice.
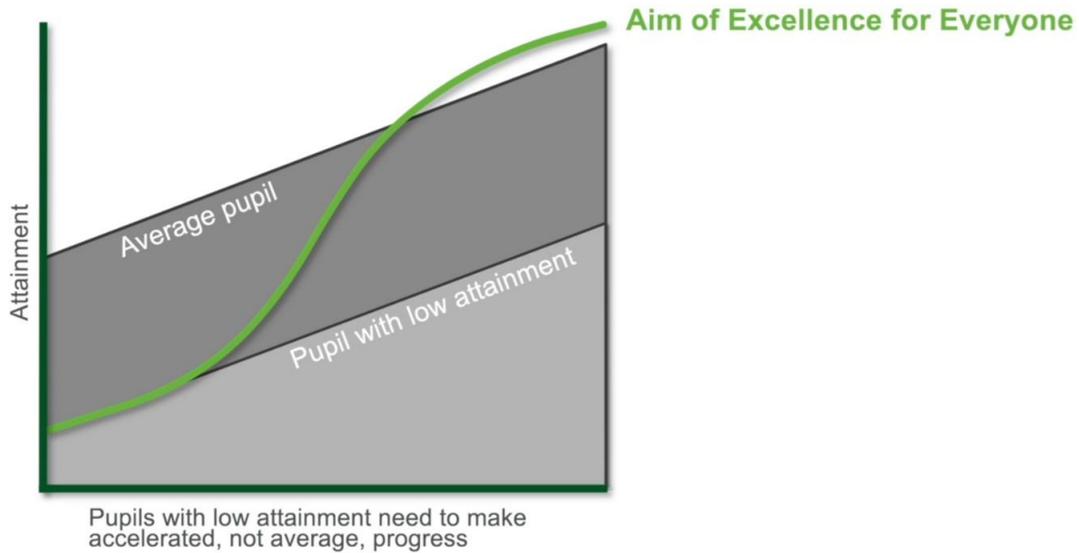
Figure 1: Aim of EfE programme is challenging the gap between attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to their non-disadvantaged peers.

This report presents the findings of the impact evaluation of the programme, which was delivered by ImpactEd from January 2021 to April 2022. This focused on measuring the following outcomes:

Stakeholder group	Outcomes
Schools and staff	Positive changes in school leadership practices
	Improved access to quality professional training support
	Improved collaboration within the sector
Pupils	Improved metacognition
	Improved self-efficacy
	Improved resilience
	Improved attainment

This report evaluates the outcomes achieved in a sub-set of schools participating in the Excellence for Everyone programme, as well as showcasing as case studies projects undertaken through EfE. It captures key lessons which can be shared with schools across the network facing similar challenges. As noted above, given pandemic related disruptions to the evaluation, this report focuses primarily on implementation lessons from qualitative data, while sharing relevant insights from quantitative data collected.

2. Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach to measure outcomes for young people, and a qualitative approach to measuring outcomes for senior leaders in schools and showcasing key lessons from the programme. The following research questions guided the evaluation:

1. What change was experienced by pupils who participated in the Excellence for Everyone programme in relation to non-cognitive outcomes?
2. What change was experienced by senior leaders in schools who participated in the Excellence for Everyone programme in relation to leadership practices?
3. What key lessons and learning can be taken from programme delivery to be shared with schools facing similar challenges across the Challenge Partners network?

Data collection and analysis

Qualitative research was conducted with school staff involved in delivery of the programme at six schools across three Hubs. The quantitative analysis involved a pre-post test design where pupils were assessed at the beginning (baseline collection), middle (midpoint), and end (final collection) of the programme.

As set out in the limitations below, the data that has been collected has changed from the original evaluation design, which originally intended to collect attainment data for participating and control pupils and survey school staff. The following data has been collected against the specific programme outcomes related to the research questions:

Measure	Data collection methods
	Outcomes for pupils
Improved metacognition	Pupil surveys: ▶ Metacognition was measured using sub-scales from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire for secondary pupils, and the Junior Metacognitive Awareness Inventory for primary pupils. Baseline = 132 pupils, midpoint = 38 pupils, final = 55 pupils
Improved self-efficacy	▶ Self-efficacy was measured using the self-efficacy sub-scale from the MSLQ for both primary and secondary pupils. Baseline = 144 pupils, midpoint = 59 pupils, final = 12 pupils ▶ Grit was measured using the Grit-S Scale for both primary and secondary pupils. Baseline = 132 pupils, midpoint = 48 pupils.
Improved resilience	▶ Drop-offs in survey responses reflect challenges with pupil and teacher absences linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Measure	Data collection methods
	Qualitative research ► Focus group with 6 school staff from 5 schools in Aspire and Herts & Becks Hubs ► Interviews with 4 school staff from 3 schools in Aspire, Herts & Bucks, and Portsmouth hubs
Improved attainment	► Focus groups and interviews with school staff, as above
Outcomes for schools and staff	
School leadership practices	► Focus group with 6 school staff from 5 schools in Aspire and Herts & Becks Hubs ► Interviews with 4 school staff from 3 schools in Aspire, Herts & Bucks, and Portsmouth hubs
Professional training support	
Improved sector collaboration	

 The qualitative data was analysed using a deductive thematic approach, meaning that we systematically 'code' the data to find common themes and present these, drawing on examples where appropriate. Although the qualitative sample was small (as acknowledged in the limitations below), this has been triangulated with findings from independent evaluations of the predecessor programme, Challenge the Gap, undertaken in Portsmouth and Southwark in 2017/18. These provide interesting insights which could be helpful to schools in thinking about how they approach the disadvantage gap.

The evaluation used descriptive statistical analyses to compare and understand pupil survey data. The evaluation also used parametric methods (two-sample t-tests) to see if findings were statistically significant – that is, to see if we could rule out the possibility that any observed difference between changes in pupil attainment in maths and social emotional skills reported before and after the programme was down to chance.

Throughout this report, we use national average benchmarks for pupil questionnaire data. These are based on results from over 100,000 pupils nationally who have responded to these questionnaires on the ImpactEd platform from 2020-22. This data provides us with a means of contextualising results from the EfE programme with that of other pupils nationally during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Limitations

► **Covid-19 had a substantial impact on programme delivery** in schools. Virtually all schools involved in the research reported that they had to change, or temporarily or permanently stop programme delivery during periods of school closure throughout 2020 and 2021, and when all pupils were back in school due to high levels of pupil and staff absence throughout 2020, 2021 and early 2022.

► In practice this meant quantitative elements of the evaluation were significantly limited by the **absence of a control or comparison group** and by **small sample sizes** in quantitative surveys. This means we can only establish the level of association between participation in the EfE programme and changes in outcomes over time. We cannot claim that any changes observed were definitely caused by participation in the EfE programme.

► **Changes in attainment are based on qualitative research** only. The evaluation originally was designed to collect quantitative attainment data for participating pupils and a control group directly from schools, but this was not collected from schools due to the challenges collecting this data through the pandemic. Most notably, school staff involved in programme delivery changed over the period of the evaluation and then had less incentive to provide the data requested.

► When calculating percentage change between survey timepoints (e.g. baseline to final surveys), the analysis only uses the observations for which we can match baseline and final results between individual pupils. As **sample sizes decreased over time (i.e. less pupils completed midpoint and final surveys than baseline)**, this limits the robustness of the analysis. In particular, no secondary pupils completed final survey data at the time of reporting.

► Sample sizes also decrease when analysing for sub-groups of pupils. Analysis is presented to compare outcomes for pupils eligible for Pupil Premium with non-Pupil Premium peers, and for female and male pupils. As there were only small sample sizes of children who speak English as an Additional Language (13 pupils), Looked After Children (6 pupils) and children with Special Educational Need or Disability (21 pupils), demographic breakdowns have not been completed for these sub-groups.

► The evaluation also originally intended to collect data related to outcomes for school staff through a survey. However, this was not conducted due to changes in lead staff at schools (as mentioned above) and delays in delivering the programme and evaluation associated with Covid-19. This means that only a relatively small number of schools were represented in the research which may not be reflective of the schools participating in the programme more widely.

These limitations mean that we focus more in this report on the qualitative elements of the evaluation, which were less adversely affected, while using quantitative analysis to supplement these insights.

4. Outcomes for schools and staff

A priority in the evaluation was to map changes in leadership and broader school practices linked to the intended outcomes of the programme, as well as surface implementation lessons which may apply to other schools. Using data from interviews and focus groups, this section provides an overview of findings against the intended programme outcomes of:

1) Positive changes in school leadership practices
2) Improved access to quality professional training support
3) Improved collaboration within the sector

Positive changes in school leadership practices

Key finding 1: Staff members' understanding of 'disadvantage' and their pupils' development and barriers to learning deepened as a result of the programme, affecting the delivery of interventions.

In qualitative interviews and focus groups, one of the most consistent findings schools reported was gaining a **more effective and holistic understanding of the definition of 'disadvantage'** as a result of the EfE resources. In particular, there was a focus on expanding the range of factors beyond the standard use of Pupil Premium as a proxy for 'disadvantage'.

This impacted on practice not only in schools' rationale for selecting pupils to participate in the EfE programme, but also in selection of pupils to participate in other interventions across school:

❝ *I think it was really helpful for all staff to understand the children that were being targeted and why. So how we were going to narrow that gap for our disadvantaged pupils, and in particular the prior middle attaining disadvantaged pupils who are a group not making the same progress as everybody else. And I know that other teachers who weren't specifically part of the project benefited from then going away and identifying those children in their own classes, and focusing and targeting on those children.*

School staff also described how the EfE programme had led them to **think about their pupils more holistically in terms of development, really trying to understand barriers to their learning**. Rather than just targeting interventions to improve academic attainment, the EfE programme encouraged them to get to know their pupils as individuals, unpick short- and long-term barriers to their learning as individual pupils and approaches to overcome these.

❝ *It's so easy as a teacher to get consumed with data-driven targets, [EfE] makes you take a step back and think about the child as a whole, and what you put in place within the classroom, outside of the classroom... the fact that they're not machines. And that's the best way to get the best out of the child. They need something extra, it's not just all about maths and English.*

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While schools selected a subject or skill specific focus (e.g. maths or reading), intervention activities often came back to building resilience, confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem. For example, two primary schools who focused on reading as the focus of the programme described how they had chosen this subject as it was "a platform [for children] to build confidence in all subjects":

❝ *A lot of it is about talk because a lot of them would say they didn't like to share their ideas, they wouldn't put their hands up in class, they were afraid to ask for help because they lacked that confidence of being able to speak. So we've worked on that confidence and building their self-esteem.*

Staff interviewed as part of the research anticipated that **this more holistic and individualised approach to pupils' development and barriers to learning would be a long-term change** that they could sustain in the future.

Prompts for practitioners

► What do you define as "disadvantage" in your school? What groups and individuals are contained within that broad term, and how does their experience vary?

► How can you get to a more precise understanding of the support individual pupils might need? What diagnostic tools can you use to understand specific learning challenges or social and emotional barriers?

► How are your staff being supported to develop a more nuanced understanding of disadvantage, to avoid assuming uniformity of experience?

Key finding 2: Intervention design and implementation quality were positively affected by the programme, with a particular focus on ensuring sustainable support.

A second key theme was around the importance of implementation, with a particular focus on creating the factors for the EfE programme to succeed and thoughtful design of interventions off the back of the input provided by the programme.

For example, staff recommended that schools should **start to set-up programmes related to tackling disadvantage for the next academic year in the summer term prior to starting delivery** (particularly for secondary schools). For instance, selecting pupils who would participate, and making the pupils, their parents and wider school staff aware of the programme was most effectively done well in advance of starting delivery:

❝ *"It means that when you start in September, you've got a fresh start... and the pupils know the purpose and intent. We always find if we come back in September and we're picking*

students, it then ends up being October, November, by the time you actually have time to be able to meet those children. The earlier you start with your cohort, the easier it is.

Ensuring that **staff who would be involved in delivering the programme would have the time to commit to the programme** and were bought-in was also important:

❝ *Obviously, we all have different responsibilities and we all have different amount of classes, and it's sometimes really hard to find time we can all meet together. So a team that are willing and able to give up some of their time off timetable is also really appreciated.*

Ensuring that the scale of the programme is manageable for delivery through planning and resources effectively was highlighted by all schools involved in the research, and **scaling up over time rather than being too ambitious at the outset**.

Making sure that intervention sessions are well-planned in their structure, length and frequency was identified as being important to ensure that all pupils could fully participate and would be regularly taking part in the programme.

Examples of interventions being delivered by the three case study schools involved in our research are set out below:

Case study school	Intervention activities for EfE pupils
School 1: Chancellor's School	▶ Mentoring from a member of school staff ▶ Individual profile outlining how they learn best ▶ Highlighted on all staff registers ▶ First priority to target for extracurricular support and academic intervention activities ▶ A variety of activities personalised to their year group e.g. study skills and revision activities for Year 11 pupils
School 2: Court Lane Junior School	▶ Targeted reading interventions focused on comprehension activities using schemes that the school already bought into ▶ Group 1 interventions took place daily with a teaching assistant ▶ Group 2 interventions took place three times a week with a teacher
School 3: St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School	▶ Targeted reading interventions three times a week delivered by a teaching assistant ▶ Tracking feelings using smiley faces at the start of every lesson ▶ Friday wellbeing activities in group sessions

A set timetable and consistently allocated staff working together as part of a team underpinned the most successful delivery. This was characterised by:

▶ Prioritising and consistently holding time for the interventions to take place.

► Finding times that would consistently work well for interventions within the school day, such as during assemblies in primary school, was helpful in ensuring they could regularly take place.

► Using resources or schemes of learning that schools already has where possible, or ensuring there is time for staff to plan and prepare new interventions, was important in ensuring programme delivery was manageable.

Naturally, schools did face particular challenges with this due to school closures and absences related to the Covid-19 pandemic:

❝❝ *We just wish we could have seen them more. I think that's kind of what our major challenge has been... I think it just we just needed a bit more time to do it.*

However, prioritising time on communication and coordination helped mitigate against the real challenges posed by both staff and pupil absence.

In addition, **communicating with parents was seen as key to effecting change for pupils through the programme:**

❝❝ *Don't underestimate the power of communicating with parents.*

Getting parental buy-in was reported to be key to success. Across primary and secondary stages, schools found the programme was most effective where they shared pupils' targets with parents at the outset and through regular monitoring updates.

One school highlighted that holding events where parents would be invited into school as part of the programme was a future ambition – something it had not been possible to implement to date due to Covid-19.

School staff also identified changes to their daily practice as a result of the EfE programme. One teacher noted that they had **embedded pupil self-reflection in their classroom and were listening to pupil voice more**, a change that they hoped to roll out across the wider school

❝❝ *I have been listening to student voice a lot more than I was before. And also making sure that students are really reflecting on themselves as learners in class. My department has really focused on that and I'm going to be doing training for all staff in the new year to talk about some of the things that I've learned over the project, so hopefully they can also act on student voice more, really get students to kind of evaluate themselves in order to develop those softer skills that are necessary for life.*

Another primary school teacher highlighted that they had rolled out the use of daily feelings check-ins across the whole of their year group, an intervention that they started with target pupils on the EfE programme and had been an effective tool that "*gave us a lot more understanding of the children and made us change our practice according to what we saw across subjects, not just in reading*". This wider use of interventions in schools involved in the research meant that "*the whole year group was benefiting, even though we were only looking at that smaller group of children*".

While there are positive indications of changes to school practices being rolled out more widely across schools, one staff member interviewed reflected that this was at an early stage for their school:

> *In our mental health strand [as part of the EfE programme], the teacher went on mental health training and she brought in some ideas and now every class does similar things in terms of mental health across the school. So that's worked well… [but] I don't really think we've seen the whole impact yet… it's little ideas that we've done [so far].*

Particularly where Covid-19 had impacted on programme delivery, a **delay to wider-scale adoption of changes in practices** was evident across schools involved in the research, although **participants were optimistic about the potential for this to take place in the future**. However, for some schools who have been involved in the EfE programme over a longer period of time, staff are bought into the approach across the school – as evidenced in Case Study 1 below.

Prompts for practitioners

▶ When planning any new programme or support, are you leaving sufficient lead-in time? Are you using resources such as the EEF's guide to implementation to plan deliberately for how change could be sustained?

▶ How can you avoid reinventing the wheel? What existing structures, schemes of work and relationships can you draw on? Have you paid sufficient attention to the timetable to ensure focused time for working on these issues is prioritised?

▶ What can you do to engage parents early in this process? How can co-designing approaches with them be part of your process?

▶ Case Study 1 below showcases a school who has embedded a focus on disadvantage over a long period of time. If you are at this stage, is there anything you can learn from this example? If you are earlier in your journey, where can you start small to help build up capacity and expertise over time?

Case study 1: Chancellor's School, Herts & Bucks Hub

Chancellor's School have until recently been the lead school for the Excellence for Everyone programme within the Danes Educational Trust, and have previously been delivering the programme at Chancellor's School for over six years. In order to scale up the programme, they asked for volunteers across school staff who would be prepared to support delivery by mentoring an EfE student, meaning they could reach seven pupils in each year group who would be targeted for a full academic year.

Maintaining a high profile of target pupils and the programme across school throughout the year was seen as key to success: all EfE pupils are highlighted on staff registers; each pupil has an individual profile outlining how they learn best; they are offered a variety of personalised activities. Additionally, there are individual activities for each year group based on the needs of individual pupils – for instance, Year 7 and 10 have been focusing on building self-esteem, while Year 11 have been doing study skills and revision activities. EfE pupils are routinely targeted as first priority for extracurricular support and academic intervention activities. The school highlighted the **focus on individual pupils' and their individual needs** as leading to change for pupils:

> *It raises the profile of these particular pupils and highlights them as an individual. It identifies their needs and desires allowing our staff to better understand and support them. And when you really drill down into that student, and you give them that praise, that encouragement, that positivity, tell them 'you're special,' and their parents see that as well... that's when you see those students really change.*

The programme was reported to be **particularly beneficial as a preventative approach with younger pupils – with Year 8 being an optimal year group** as staff know and can identify target pupils better than Year 7. **Communication with parents is critical**:

> *It's so powerful if you can catch them early, and parental engagement is paramount. Some of these students have parents whose experiences of schools are not positive. If you can change the perspective of their parents, through the positive experiences of their children, out of everything we do that probably has the most impact.*

Based on the school's evaluation activity, they reported seeing **positive outcomes for participating pupils' engagement in school, behaviour, attendance and self-belief** – which it was expected led to improved attainment. they highlighted the importance of having an **effective system in place for evaluation**, with clearly targeted outcomes and mechanisms to measure change for targeted pupils.

The school highlighted that the large scale of EfE programme in their school was only achievable given their experience delivering the programme, resources built up over time, and the high level of support and buy-in from school staff because "*they can see it makes a difference*". The school recommended that **schools new to the EfE programme (or starting to deliver other similar programmes) start small, preferably with a single year group, and build up the scale of delivery over time.**

Improved access to quality professional training support

Key finding 3: Schools appreciated the mix of in-person training sessions and access to EfE resources which they anticipated would lead to more research-informed approaches at whole-school level.

The mix of in-person delivery and access to resources was critical to where the programme was a success. As the new EfE format provides school with autonomy over how the resources are used, schools still found it important to provide a structured programme for staff coordination and planning.

Schools particularly found in-person EfE sessions a valuable opportunity. In particular, **having staff members in different roles** (e.g. a senior leader, teacher and teaching assistant) **working together was identified as being really beneficial**, so that staff could "*bounce ideas off*" each other. It also meant that staff shared ownership (and workload), meaning they were more likely to run with programme delivery and could drive it forward in school more easily (without too much additional senior leader involvement / direction).

Attending sessions in person outside of their school was important to ensure staff had this quality training time protected:

❝ *I think that's why it got off to a good start, because the five people gave that whole day their attention.*

Additionally, having trainers from the programme in to visit the school was highlighted by one school as having been of particular benefit to them.

Some schools felt that virtual sessions (due to Covid-19) were less valuable than face-to-face training sessions and protected time away from school – although it was suggested by one school that having **more regular, shorter opportunities for schools to check-in** with each other could be an addition to the programme that would be best suited to an online format:

❝ *Even if it wasn't a whole day or even an hour session, just a five minute afternoon session on zoom to say, "Right, where are we up to?" in breakout rooms [would be useful]. Because I think when you talk to other people who were doing it, who are trying to run a group with the same focus, you do get so much more from it... I think that's where you bounce ideas off each other.*

Schools involved felt that the **focus of sessions was well-targeted towards their interests and needs**:

❝ *The whole programme itself really fitted with where we wanted to go and how we wanted to move forward in terms of school improvement.*

Using EfE resources to take a research-informed approach was seen as an integral part of the programme by schools, and as seen in Case Study 2 below, starting with research to inform their approach to planning interventions was an approach school staff reported they would take again in future. Schools reported that **staff across the school more widely benefited from the resources**, not just those who directly participated. In many cases learning from training sessions and resources were shared across wider school staff:

❝❞ *We've been directing the EfE documentation towards all staff... each member of staff has been given links to the resources, it's not just the one year group that's had access to that.*

Those schools who had been delivering EfE in schools for a shorter period of time reported that disseminating learnings from the programme across school was a future ambition – two schools specifically highlighted that they would train wider school staff in the future.

Key finding 4: All schools involved in the research intended to continue rolling out the programme in some form in the future.

Schools all intended to continue their participation in the Excellence for Everyone programme in the future, with continued roll-out either with a new cohort of pupils or by embedding elements of the programme that had been delivered with other year groups or across the wider school.

One school who had been delivering EfE for a number of years suggested that a future training support offer as part of the programme that could be valuable would be a **specific training offer for staff who are taking over leading the delivery of the programme in schools that are well-established in running EfE**. It was apparent through this evaluation that schools' lead staff member for the programme often changes as responsibilities change, so there may be a wider need for a shorter, specific training option for staff who are familiar with the programme and may have been involved in delivery in their school previously, but are now taking over leadership. For instance, a half day, intensive refresher course covering essential information and common challenges could benefit these individuals, rather than participating in the full training programme.

Prompts for practitioners

► Use of self-serve resources in professional learning can provide flexibility and ease of access. What risks come with this? What structures can you build around access to resources to generate the highest quality discussions?

► How do you build status and momentum around a "lead" role in your school? Over time, how can this individual help to generate bottom-up excitement and awareness of how to address issues associated with disadvantage?

► For staff that have experience of specific training sessions or resources, how do you differentiate? What is the balance between refresher content versus repeating training material in its entirety?

► What does Case Study 2 below suggest about how to manage the scope of professional learning and programme delivery?

Case study 2: Court Lane Junior School, Portsmouth Hub

The school wanted to use the EfE programme to close the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, with a particular focus on reading because "*once the child can read fluently and comprehensively, they can then access other areas of the curriculum*". Fourteen **pupils were chosen using a wider definition of disadvantage than just PP (based on the EfE training),** including young carers, parents who work long hours, low-income families, SEND and EAL pupils. Year 4 was the initial focus to provide early intervention for pupils underachieving based on Accelerated Reader STAR reader data.

Two intervention groups received targeted interventions either daily with a teaching assistant or three times a week with a teacher, focused on comprehension activities **using schemes that the school already bought into**. Using these schemes **meant that the planning was already provided and minimised additional workload.**

Individual pupils showed **progress on standardised assessments** against age related expectations in the term when the interventions were being delivered within school as planned. In addition, it was reported that **pupils' resilience, self-esteem and confidence to articulate their thoughts improved**. However, the school had to change to virtual delivery due to Covid-19 in 2020 which they reported decreased the level of impact on pupils.

A key learning for the school was to **keep the focus and scale of programme delivery manageable**. Originally, they planned to focus on reading into writing but realised that limiting the focus just to reading was more manageable. Having three separate groups (as originally intended) was too ambitious and they recognised that groups had not received the same amount of attention, which was a key learning point moving forward.

Sharing the programme across the wider school staff was important to **ensure everyone was aware of the programme and its purpose and was bought into it** – particularly as the school had planned to roll out the intervention to Years 3 and 5, although this had been paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The school **appreciated the time and space provided by the EfE sessions for the team delivering the programme in school**, which included a senior leader, class teacher and teaching assistant, to thoroughly plan for delivery and reflect as a team on their intended impact, and how best to achieve this.

This approach also empowered the teacher and teaching assistant to deliver and develop the programme – and facilitated them talking to other schools in the Hub to share ideas and learnings. Being directed to take a **research-informed approach and accessing EfE resources had been really valuable** and was an approach school staff would take again in future when planning interventions. Similarly, the programme enabled the school to rethink how they structured and resourced interventions by having teachers and teaching assistants working together more closely.

Improved collaboration within the sector

Key finding 5: Staff found that high levels of collaboration internally to deliver the programme within their school was an enabler of success. Through EfE programme sessions, they benefited from opportunities to collaborate and share ideas, learnings and findings.

Improved collaboration internally across school staff delivering the programme in different roles was evident through all schools involved in the research. Having a senior leader, teaching staff and teaching assistants involved in delivery of the programme was seen as a beneficial structure to allow staff to collaborate and share ideas with each other, as well as ensuring programme delivery was manageable:

❝ *The structure of having a senior leader, teacher and TA working collaboratively was very strong. This was very much a project that was led from the TA more than anybody else because she was the person who was most closely working one to one with the children are in small grades. And then the teacher had that ownership of it as well, so they could drive it forward.*

Regular opportunities for collaboration with other schools through the EfE sessions were seen by schools interviewed as being good opportunities for collaboration by facilitating discussion of what they were doing through the programme, their key learnings and findings, and an opportunity to share and "*magpie*" ideas:

❝ *That's been really good, to listen to other staff members in other schools... I've made loads of notes and then shared it in our staff meeting. And that was really useful for the rest of the school.*

There was appetite for the programme to facilitate the continuation of this collaboration with other schools where they had shared interests on the programme:

❝ *It would be nice if we were given the chance to communicate separately from the EfE programme [sessions]... if there was some kind of platform for us to be able to reach out to other schools, and know who is doing what and with what age group.*

The extent to which participating schools had continued to collaborate with each other outside of the EfE sessions was unclear, although it should be recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic will have acted as a significant barrier to enabling continued collaboration across schools.

Some schools saw the value in attending sessions with schools across primary and secondary stages. For instance, one interviewee from a primary school said:

❝ *We were part of a group that had infant schools, junior schools, primary schools and secondary schools. It didn't matter that we weren't necessarily the same phase. It was really*

interesting, listening to other schools, different settings, and how that some of their challenges were very similar. That was helpful.

Additionally, one secondary school interviewee highlighted the value in listening to the perspective of primary school staff and learning from their approaches:

❝ *I do really like to listen and gain ideas from the primary sector... it's really important that we are reminded of what we should be doing from primary school teachers.*

However, this consultee did go on to acknowledge that hearing from schools who were delivering similar projects was also useful to be able to share ideas with each other. A preference for primary or secondary only groups was shared by other school staff interviewed as "*the way that it's implemented is really different*". In order to resolve these differences, **having a variety of cross-stage group sessions with some primary or secondary specific groups** would allow for the benefits of both approaches to be experienced by participating schools.

Prompts for practitioners

▶ When planning collaboration, how do you ensure the best possible mix of perspectives? How can you bring together different roles into shared working groups?

▶ What is the balance between collaboration within schools and collaboration between schools? How are you designing opportunities for both to provide perspectives beyond the day to day?

▶ What can you do to facilitate sharing of perspectives across key stages – particularly in relation to transition points in the curriculum?

3. Outcomes for pupils

As noted above, the process and qualitative aspects of the evaluation were supplemented by a quantitative survey deployed across schools as well as gathering of academic attainment data where feasible. As mentioned earlier, schools' work on the EfE programme and our evaluation were significantly hampered by ongoing pandemic disruption and associated staff absences and turnover. This limits our confidence in the validity and reliability of the quantitative data gathered, which presents a mixed picture. These results saw some variation in trends by primary and secondary schools and are reported in turn by:

► Trends for primary school pupils and secondary school pupils in metacognition, self-efficacy and grit

► Variation by Pupil Premium status

► Trends in attainment

Primary school pupils

Key finding 6: At primary stage, pupils saw an increase in metacognition, self-efficacy and grit between baseline, mid-point and final surveys, with the most sustained increases in self-efficacy.
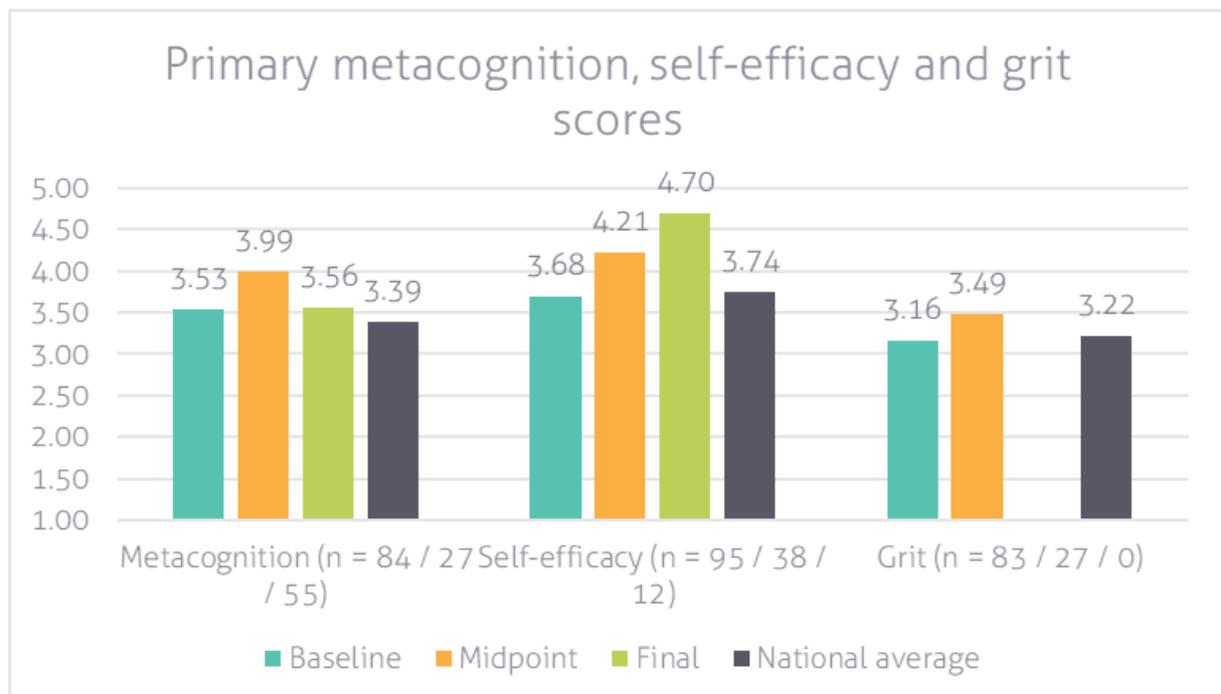

Figure 2: Participating primary pupils' average baseline, midpoint and final scores (scored 1-5) for metacognition, self-efficacy and grit measures, compared to national averages.

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At primary level, pupils' metacognition was at its highest at mid-point survey timepoint, which was 11.5% higher than at baseline. By the final survey this had decreased again to be slightly above the average baseline score (by 0.03) – however, this change was not statistically significant. Pupils' scores remained above the national average of 3.39 throughout the programme.

Self-efficacy consistently increased between baseline, mid-point and final survey timepoint for primary school pupils, with a 25.5% increase between baseline and final which was statistically significant. However, it is important to keep in mind the small sample size here, with only 12 pupils completing the final self-efficacy survey, and so these results should be interpreted with caution. Scores were slightly below the national average of 3.74 at baseline, and increased above national average in midpoint and final surveys.

Grit increased by 10.8% between baseline and mid-point survey, a change which was not statistically significant. The average score was slightly below the national average at baseline (3.16 compared to national average of 3.22) but increased to above national average at midpoint (3.49). No pupils completed the grit survey at final timepoint.

Secondary school pupils

Key finding 7: Secondary pupils experienced a decrease in all three measures of metacognition, grit, and self-efficacy from baseline to midpoint surveys – these results were not statistically significant.

Due to challenges with data collection timings and disruption by the pandemic, secondary school pupils only completed baseline and mid-point surveys. Between these two survey points, **metacognition decreased by 2.8%, grit decreased by 4.5% and self-efficacy decreased by 2.5%.** None of these changes were statistically significant, and it is again important to note the small sample size of pupils here.

This finding may be in line with the national picture of further learning losses for secondary school pupils in reading in the 2021/22 Autumn term, compared to recovery in learning losses for primary school pupils in this period, as metacognition, self-efficacy and grit are linked to academic attainment.[3]

For self-efficacy, average scores were slightly below the national average of 4.66 in baseline (4.54) and midpoint (4.39) surveys. For metacognition and grit, scores remained around the national average due to the small change from baseline to midpoint – starting slightly above and ending slightly below.

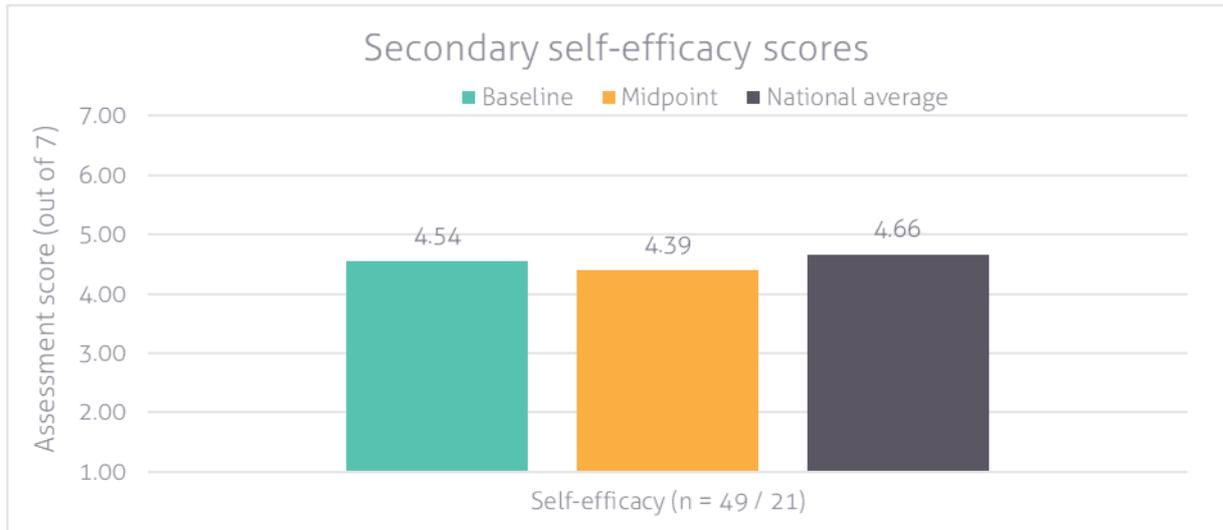[3] Education Policy Institute, March 2022. Understanding Progress in the 2020/21 Academic Year

Figure 8: Participating secondary school pupils' average baseline and midpoint scores for self-efficacy (scored 1-7), compared to national average.
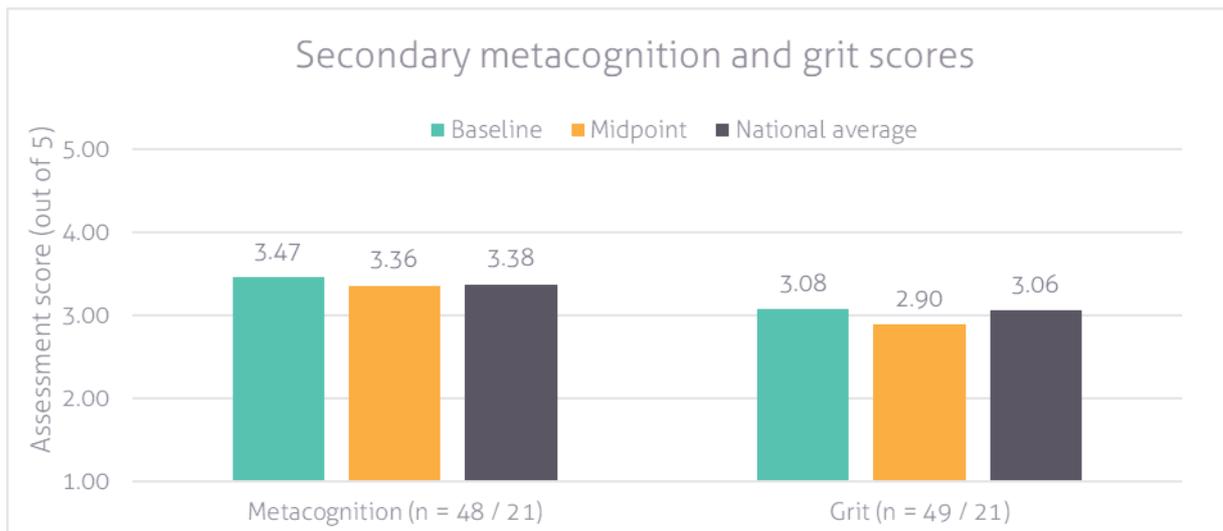

Figure 9: Participating secondary school pupils' average baseline and midpoint scores for metacognition and grit (scored 1-5), compared to national average.

Given that these results were not statistically significant, we should be wary of drawing overarching conclusions from them. However, they may provide some opportunity for reflection on how the programme can be implemented as effectively at secondary school level as at primary given the likely greater coordination challenges at secondary.

Key finding 8: Pupils eligible for Pupil Premium (PP) generally scored lower than non-PP pupils in non-cognitive outcomes, with some variability in the levels of increase throughout the programme.

ImpactEd's national research shows that in general PP pupils tend to score lower than non-PP pupils on non-cognitive outcomes such as self-efficacy, metacognition and grit – both prior to the pandemic and subsequently.

Data from EfE is consistent with this trend: **PP pupils consistently scored lower than non-PP pupils** except for final timepoint for self-efficacy, which is based on only 2 survey responses and therefore we would have limited confidence in this data. At all other timepoints in all three measures, PP pupils had lower average scores than non-PP pupils.

Both PP and non-PP pupils experienced an increase in self-efficacy between baseline, midline and final. Reviewing midline data where the sample size is larger than for final results, non-PP students saw a slightly larger increase than PP pupils, of 17%.
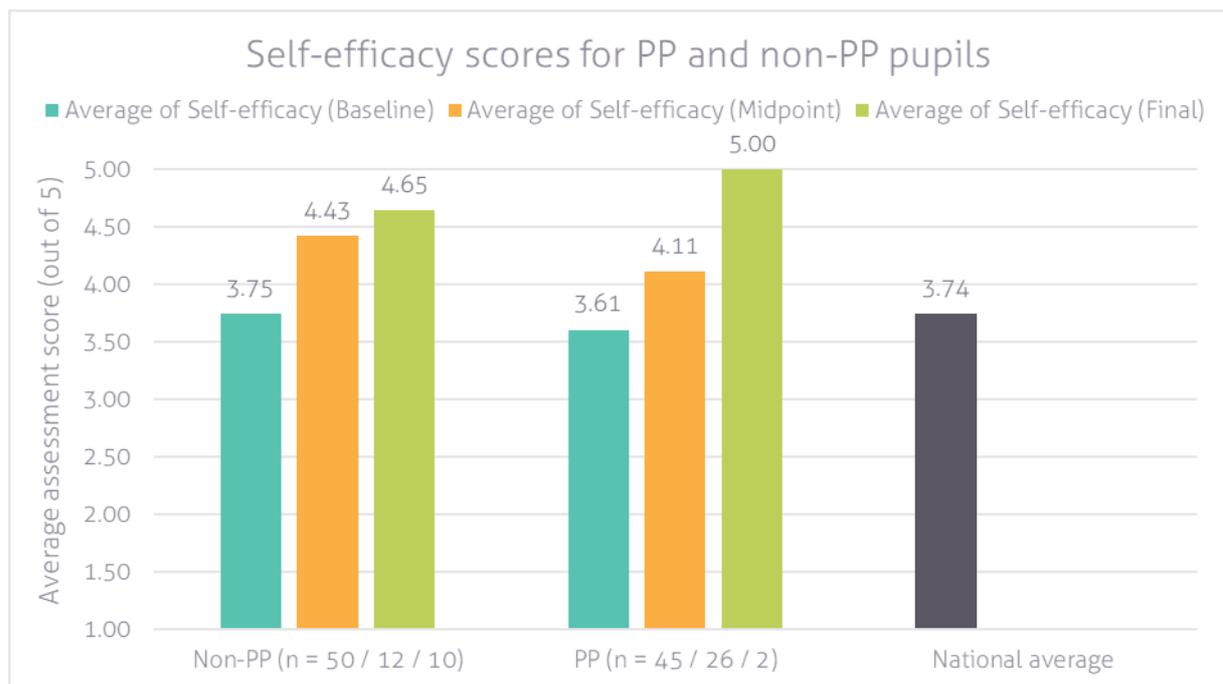

Self-efficacy scores for PP and non-PP pupils

■ Average of Self-efficacy (Baseline) ■ Average of Self-efficacy (Midpoint) ■ Average of Self-efficacy (Final)

Figure 3: Participating primary school pupils' average baseline, midpoint and final scores (scored 1-5) for self=efficacy, by Pupil Premium status compared to national average.

Whilst non-PP pupils saw a small increase of 1.8% in metacognition, **PP pupils saw a decrease of 2.5%** in the same measure between baseline and final survey timepoint. PP pupils were in line with the national average at the final survey point (3.62 compared to a national average of 3.39), while non-PP pupils were slightly above the national average with an average score of 3.62.
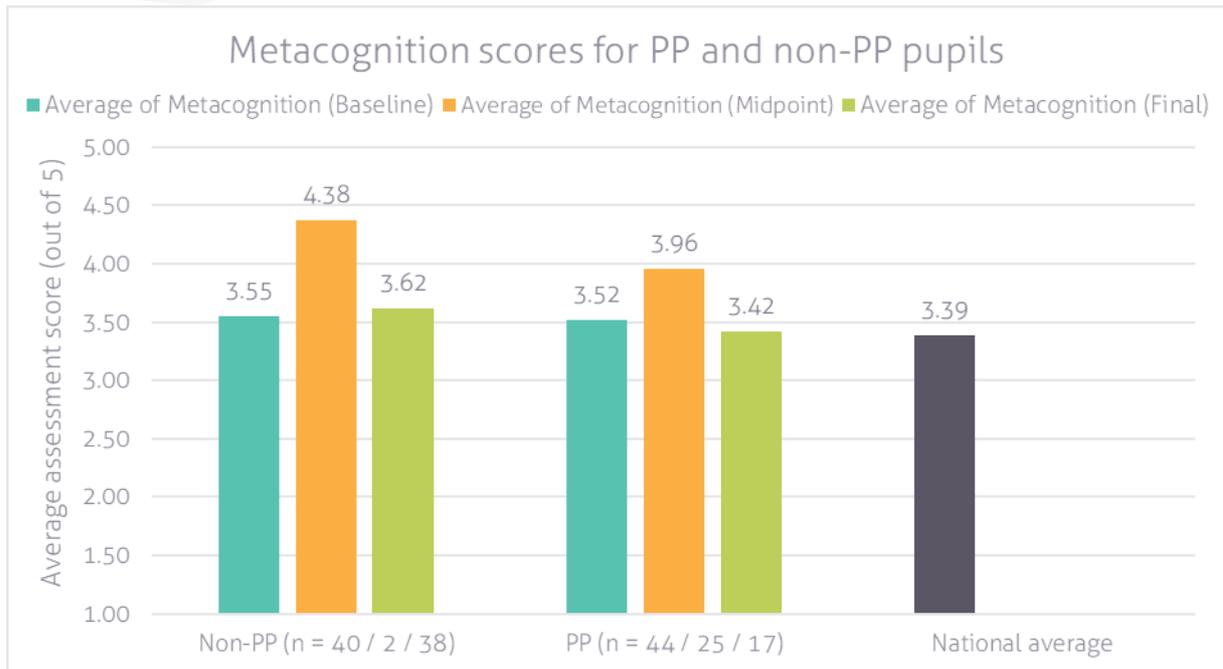
Figure 4: Participating primary school pupils' average baseline, midpoint and final scores (scored 1-5) for metacognition, by Pupil Premium status compared to national average.

Whilst PP and non-PP pupils scored very similarly in grit at baseline, **non-PP pupils saw a larger increase** of 23.8% by mid-point. This meant that non-PP were considerably above the national average (4.13 compared to national average of 3.22), while PP pupils were only slightly above (3.44). However it should be noted that this is based on the responses of only two pupils and this is in line with our national data, where PP pupils typically score lower on these outcomes. No pupils responded to the final grit survey.
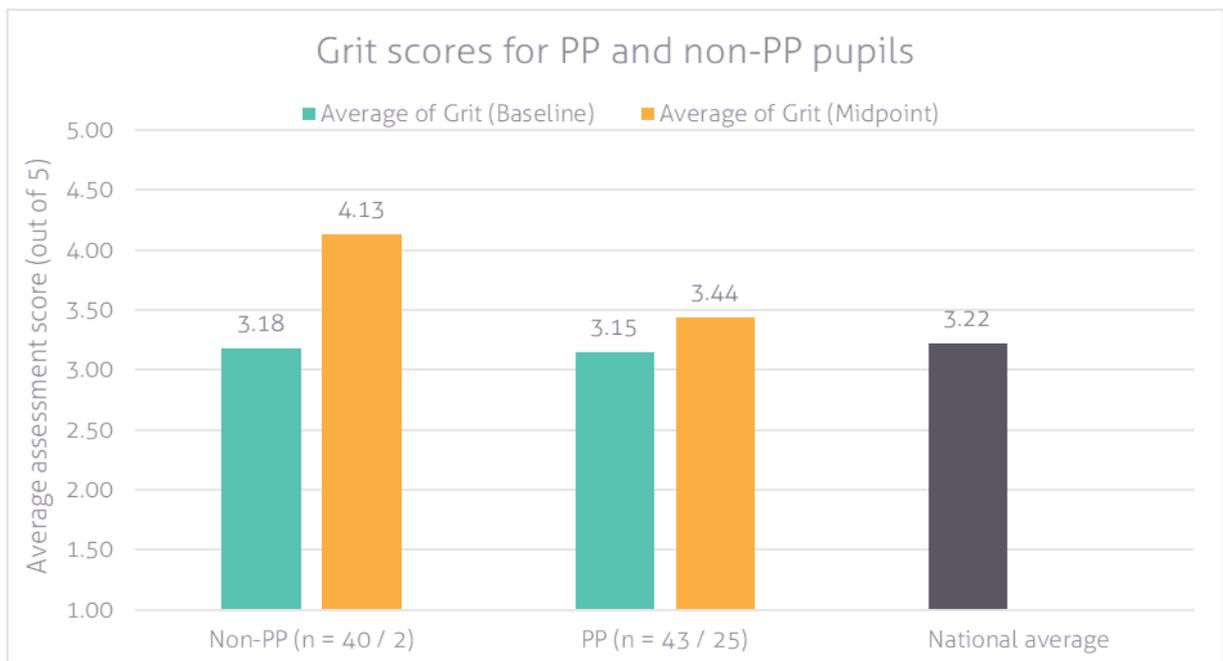

Figure 5: Participating primary school pupils' average baseline, midpoint and final scores (scored 1-5) for grit, by Pupil Premium status compared to national average.

Increased attainment

Key finding 9: School staff involved in qualitative research reported greater increases in working at grade and standardised tests for participating pupils than their peers.

Increased attainment was expected to be both a short-term outcome of targeted learning interventions, and a longer-term outcome of changes to other non-cognitive outcomes, depending on the focus of a school's interventions. Because the EfE interventions are designed by schools to meet the needs of the group of pupils participating, the balance between direct impact on academic outcomes versus those on other success measures varies from school to school. However in general participating schools felt that impact on attainment would be a crucial success measure in the long-term.

Case Study 3 below provides an example of a school observing positive impact on attainment from the programme. As this does this not involve direct comparison with a control group, it should be interpreted with caution as a statement of programme impact overall, but provides a powerful example of EfE in one school setting.

Prompts for practitioners

► Primary pupils saw generally greater progress throughout the course of the EfE evaluation than secondary. EPI research suggests that learning loss due to the Covid-19 pandemic has been more sustained for secondary-age pupils. Is this consistent with your experience?

► The evaluation draws on measure of both non-cognitive skills and academic attainment data. What success measures are most appropriate for your school to evaluate the impact of support for disadvantaged pupils? Are there intermediate outcomes you may wish to consider beyond long-term impact on attainment?

► Where you are using multiple measures to evaluate success, what can you do to triangulate between them? For example, research suggests that academic self-efficacy can be an important predictor of achievement. Is this true in your setting?

► Case Study 3 below showcases an example of a school that saw positive impact from the programme through prioritising consistency of implementation. What could you do to ensure similar consistency in your school setting?

Case Study 3: St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School, Aspire Hub

Year 3 were chosen as a focus for the Excellence for Everyone programme with six pupils selected from each of the two classes based on underperformance against reading assessments. The intention was for pupils to receive targeted interventions three times a week delivered by a teaching assistant. The primary focus was on reading which guided all activities selected, with wellbeing and confidence as other aims.

The approach was taken to select 'quieter' pupils from the classes which was felt to have been successful in helping staff to identify where these pupils were struggling to put further support in place. The intention was to **build these pupils' confidence in speaking, putting their hand up and reading aloud** in this smaller group so they would take this back into the classroom.

Staff reported that **participating pupils had made increased progress in reading** compared to their peers as well as being a success in terms of their **engagement**:

❝ *They knew that the group was theirs and they enjoyed going out to this safe space.*

Additionally, they had been able to use activities that had been successful with the intervention groups for use with the whole year group (e.g. wellbeing activities), meaning that "the whole 120 children in the year have had a benefit". The intention was for learning and resources to be shared across the whole school in the future.

Staff highlighted the **importance of maintaining the regularity of the interventions by having a set timetable and consistent allocated staff** – although this was challenging when staff were absent. They flagged that **the programme had been much more work than they originally anticipated** as designing and preparing the interventions took a lot of research in their own time. In future, they felt that **being provided with resources or ideas that could be adapted would be of benefit to the programme**, although they recognised that this approach meant that they could review a wider range of resources and select the most suitable. **Having multiple teaching staff, as well as a senior leader and teaching assistant, involved in delivery of the programme was critical** in ensuring there was enough staff availability to plan and deliver the programme.

Staff found the online meetings to collaborate with staff from other schools "really beneficial" to delivery of the programme and their teaching practice. These were an opportunity to reflect on EfE resources and share good practice:

❝ *There was a chance for us all to discuss what the speaker said and really break it down into how we can use that in our practice and what benefit we can get from it.*

The school **appreciated engaging with other schools in their local area** in particular due to having shared context, and thought it would be **valuable for EfE to facilitate their collaboration outside of the programme** (e.g. by sharing contact details).

5. Key lessons for schools, and recommendations for delivery and evaluation

Key lessons for schools

Based on the research, key lessons which could benefit schools participating in the programme, and schools implementing initiatives to tackle the disadvantage gap more generally, are:
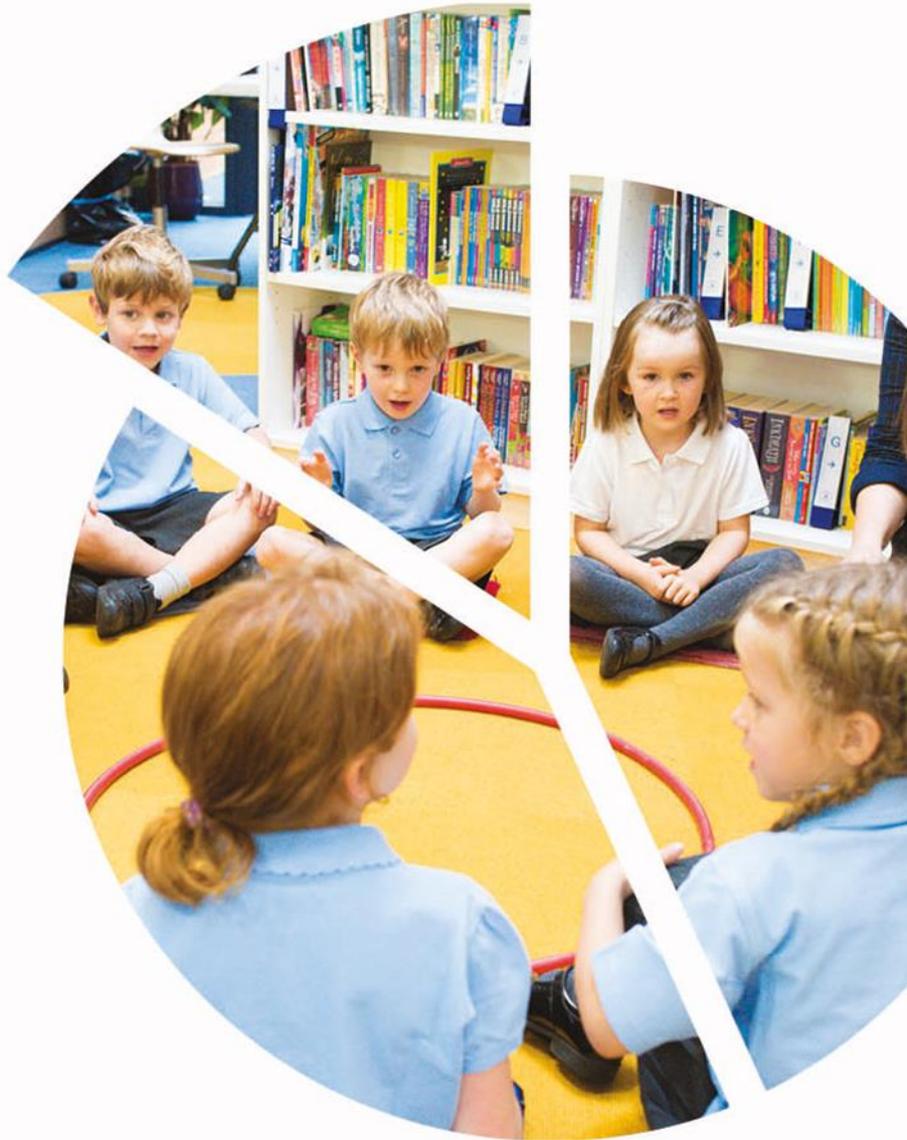
▶ Start to set-up the EfE programme for the next academic year in the summer term prior to starting delivery: for instance, selecting pupils who would participate, and making the pupils, their parents and wider school staff aware of the programme

▶ Ensure multiple staff members across different roles are involved in delivery of the programme, and that staff involved are committed to what the programme involves

▶ Ensuring that the focus and scale of the programme is manageable for delivery, and scale up over time rather than being too ambitious at the outset

▶ Maintain the regularity of interventions by having a set timetable and consistent allocated staff, and prioritise time for the interventions to take place by finding times that will consistently work well for interventions within the school day to ensure they regularly take place

▶ Use resources or schemes of learning that the school already has available where possible, or ensure there is time for staff to plan and prepare new interventions where needed

▶ Communicate with parents by sharing pupils' targets with parents at the outset and providing regular monitoring updates

▶ Disseminate information about the programme, its purpose and which pupils are participating across the school to maintain a high profile of target pupils and the programme across school

▶ Ensure staff across the school have access to EfE resources, and disseminate learning from training sessions and delivery to wider year groups or whole school staff where appropriate

▶ Ensure there is an effective system in place for evaluation, with clearly targeted outcomes and mechanisms to measure change for targeted pupils.

Recommendations for evaluation delivery

![ImpactEd]

- ► Including a survey of school staff involved in delivering the EfE programme would be an efficient way to include a larger number of schools within the evaluation and collect quantitative data on outcomes for pupils, schools and staff, as well as qualitative data and feedback
- ► Embedding a control group within future evaluation design would better allow Challenge Partners to establish the level of association between participation in the EfE programme and changes in outcomes over time
- ► Collecting attainment data from participating schools would provide more robust evidence of changes related to this outcome, ideally looking at change over a relatively long period of time post-programme.

Recommendations for programme delivery

- ► Continue to share best practice and key learnings across schools participating in the programme
- ► Consider providing more regular, shorter opportunities for schools to check-in with each other in an online format as part of the programme
- ► Consider ways to facilitate continued collaboration outside EfE programme sessions (e.g. a mechanism for sharing contact details and information about how schools are delivering the programme across participating schools).
- ► Consider whether there is demand for a specific training offer for staff who are taking over leading the delivery of the programme in schools that are well-established in running EfE.

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