



# Extended Schools Programme Annual Report 2021-2022



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This report provides summary information and an evaluation of the 2021-22 financial year which is the 16th year that the Extended Schools (ES) Programme has supported schools in the most disadvantaged contexts across Northern Ireland. Funded schools are identified using deprivation criteria, applied by DE on an annual basis, including specified levels of pupils with a Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME) and residing in areas classified as disadvantaged. Further background information on the programme can be obtained on the DE website [here](#) and a full list of the schools funded for the Programme can be viewed at [List of Extended Schools 21/22](#).

This (financial) year started with most pupils returning to school after the final Covid lockdown ended for nursery, primary and post primary schools in March 2021/22. Although Covid restrictions gradually eased as the year progressed the impact of the pandemic still presented schools with significant challenges as they returned to face to face delivery of ES Programmes.

In 2021/22 the Department of Education (DE) provided £8.953m to a total of 494 schools and 142 clusters to deliver on 2,471 action plans during the financial year. Chapter 3 provides a summary of programme delivery and highlights the scale and breadth of the programme with almost 44 % of all schools in NI receiving ES funding. As in previous years the flexibility of the ES programmes ensures a wide range of activities are delivered however there is also clear evidence that schools began to shift the focus of ES programmes to respond to needs of pupils and families emerging from Covid (Physical and Mental Well Being) as well as the recent rise in the cost of living. (Breakfast Clubs)

Chapter 4 provides a summary of the benefits of the programme including the numbers of pupils and parents who participated in ES programmes. A significant increase in participation from 2020/21 was to be expected however schools deserve much credit for transitioning back to (pre-Covid) face to face provision so seamlessly despite the challenges faced. This chapter also provides details of the support provided by the Education Authority's Community and Schools Team including a summary of the work carried out to implement recommendations from the 2020/21 Annual Report.

Summary information and examples of effective practice contained in Chapter 5 demonstrate how the ES programmes deliver improved outcomes against the 4 main policy objective areas. These examples are taken from the annual evaluation reports submitted by schools and clusters.

Clustering has been a core element of the programmes since its inception in 2006 and additional funding strands have been added to the cluster programmes since then. Chapter 6 provides a summary and analysis of how Extended Schools clusters operated during 2021/22.

The reports concludes with affirmation that the ES programme continues to provide much needed support to schools serving areas of disadvantage and, if anything, the need for such support to tackle educational underachievement is greater than ever. The report also contains a number of challenges facing the programme moving forward as well as recommendations for continued development into 2022/23.

Since its launch in 2006 the Extended Schools Programme has been a core element of the Dept of Education’s Tackling Education Disadvantage policy. As set out in the Extended Schools policy document [“Extended Schools: schools, families communities – working together” the programme aims to](#)... *reduce underachievement and improve the life chances of children and young people by enhancing their educational development and fostering their health well-being and social inclusion through the integrated delivery of the support and services necessary to ensure every child has the best start in life*”. Further background information on the programme can be obtained on the DE website [here](#).

A full list of the schools funded for the Extended Schools Programme can be viewed at: [List of Extended Schools 21/22](#)

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview, analysis and evaluation of the Extended Schools Programme across Northern Ireland (NI) for the year 2021/22 and to make recommendations for the continued development of the Extended Schools Programme.

## 2. Context

### Policy

The Extended Schools Programme must be considered in the context of a range of government strategies, policies and programmes which also seek to address educational underachievement. These include:

- [Every Schools a Good Schools \(ESaGS\)](#) - policy for school improvement
- [Count, Read: Succeed](#): strategy for improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy
- [A Fair Start](#) - A programme to address persistent educational underachievement
- [Dept of Education Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team](#) policies and funded programmes including
  - Full Service programmes;
  - West Belfast Sharing the Learning Programme and West Belfast Community Project;
  - North Belfast Primary Principals Support Programme;
  - Targeting Social Need funding;
  - Parental Engagement and Attendance Advertising Campaigns.
- [Healthy Happy Minds](#) – Counselling and Therapeutic support for primary school pupils
- [Engage Programme](#) – teaching support to address the adverse impact of Covid

### Covid

During 2021/22 the Covid pandemic continued to impact on schools ability to deliver the Extended Schools programme. This impact was greater at the start of the year because although all schools reopened in April 2021 after the most recent lockdown, some Covid restrictions remained in place. As the year progressed restrictions gradually eased despite the emergence of the Omicron Variant in 2021.

In comparison to last year most schools and clusters were able to make a partial return to face to face programmes and activities and this increased as the year progressed. Staff absences due to Covid continued to hinder delivery in some schools. Schools and Clusters also had to plan their 2021/22 programmes in the context of needs emerging from the impact of the pandemic in the previous year. In particular there was an increased focus on redirecting support to health and well-being support for pupils.

## Cost of living

The impact of the cost of living crisis has been more keenly reflected in the 2022/23 Extended Schools programme however towards the end of the 2021/22 financial year there were examples of schools and cluster switching the focus of their programmes “in year” to assist families with support. This includes an increase in the number of food related provision (e.g. Breakfast Clubs) and this trend has continued into the current financial year.

## 3. Methodology

The report draws together information gathered from the Annual Attendance Monitoring and Annual Reports submitted by each school and cluster in the programme. The annual report comprises school context data, activity monitoring reports and summative self-evaluation of the programme in each school and cluster.

Following the submission of annual reports, EA Community and Schools Team review the reports and analyse the data provided. The outcome of this review and analysis forms the basis for this Regional Annual Report for the Extended Schools Programme across the Education Authority.

Schools are required to submit their annual reports by 30 June 2022. Given the pressures schools face at this time not all reports were completed. This report is based on the number of schools and clusters that have been submitted by 15 October 2022 as follows:

- School Annual Reports: 85% of schools have completed an Annual Report
- Cluster Annual Reports: 76% of clusters have completed an Annual Report

During 2021-22 the Education Authority has carried out a review of the Annual Report format and in consultation with the Dept of Education has agreed to reformat the report for 2022/23. This new format will be more concise and will provide summary information on three key areas:

- What was delivered?
- Benefits/successes - What went well?
- Outcomes reported by schools and clusters - How do we know?

The report will also reference challenges facing the programme and recommendations to continue the development of the programme.

## Measuring Impact

This evaluation report recognises the complexity of the policy context in which the Extended Schools Programme operates and, rather than attempt to attribute systemic improvements solely to the Extended Schools Programme, it will reference evidence of outcomes from local examples to demonstrate the positive impact of the Programme. These are included in the “Outcomes” Section.

Schools are encouraged to ensure robust monitoring is in place to capture quantitative data but it is equally important that schools are able to clearly articulate positive outcomes through qualitative information including attitude surveys, pupil and parent questionnaires and teacher observations.



*Reduce underachievement and improve the life chances of children and young people by enhancing their educational development and fostering their health well-being and social inclusion through the integrated delivery of the support and services necessary to ensure every child has the best start in life*



# 3 Programme Delivery

What is the Extended Schools Programme?

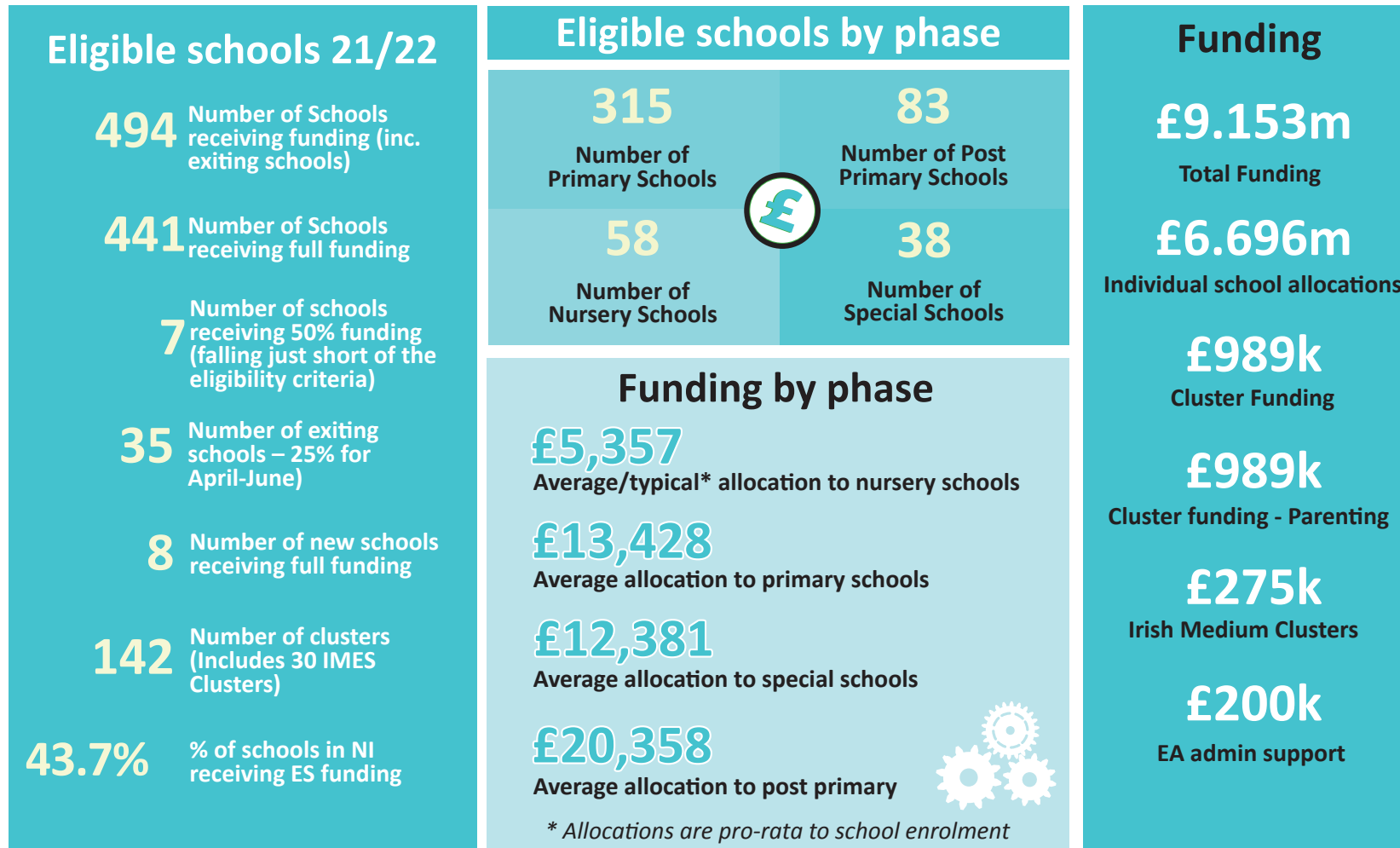
What does the Extended Schools Programme provide?

School and Cluster Programme Delivery



**Eligibility Criteria** 37% FSM or >50% of pupils with a postcode in a disadvantaged area

**What is the Extended Schools Programme?**



Full details of the allocations are available on the DE website: [List of Extended Schools 21/22](#)

## Benefits: What does the Extended Schools Programme provide

### Action Plans submitted and approved

2050

Number of school programmes funded

421

Number of cluster programmes funded



### Activity by time of day (top 3)

61%

After

9%

Before

9%

Service (specialist support delivery e.g. counselling)



### Range of activities and programmes delivered

#### Most popular categories

296 Health and Fitness

266 Literacy

205 Parenting/Family



#### Trends from 2020/21 (Up)

+16.1% (+24) Breakfast Club

+38% (+47) Sport/Health & Fitness

+35.6% (+9) Speech & Language

+13% (+10) Counselling



#### Trends from 20/21 (Down)

-14.2% (-44) Literacy

-22.6% (-31) Numeracy

-29.6% (-40) ICT Skills

-7.6% (-18) Specialist Club



88	Art/Craft/Design
87	Counselling
173	Breakfast Club
82	Community Links
15	Cookery
40	Drama/Dance
215	Extended Schools Co-Ord
8	First Aid
296	Health & Fitness
31	Healthy Eating
112	Homework Club
95	ICT & Key Skills
25	Speech & Language
78	Language Club
266	Literacy
74	Music
106	Numeracy
205	Parenting/Family
46	Recycling/Eco Activities
20	Science Club
219	Specialist Clubs/Skills
106	Sport & Sporting Skills
20	Summer Scheme
62	Youth Activities & Skills

### Comments on Trends

These trends reflect the areas of increased needs emerging from Covid. As well as a need to promote physical health for pupils after the lockdowns there is also an increased for targeted service delivery around mental health and speech and language. The increase in Breakfast Club provision is also likely to signal the first signs that schools are changing focus of their provision to address cost of living issues for their families.

Given the finite budget it is no surprise that these upward trends come at the expense of other provision. This includes more targeted curriculum support provision. It is no coincidence however that additional Covid specific support has been provided in these areas including the DE ENGAGE and ICT programme. This demonstrates the valuable flexibility of the Extended Schools Programme in action and the ability of schools to respond and adjust the use of various funding streams effectively.



## School and Cluster Programme Delivery

### Attendance/participation

**249,123**

Total number of pupils

**85,165**

Total number of parents

**33,812**

Total number of community

**+13.2%** **+29,076**

% change in attendance from 20-21 – Pupils

**+15.3%** **+11,325**

% change in attendance from 20-21 – Parents

**+9.1%** **+2,828**

% change in attendance from 20-21 - Community

### Who benefits

Activities by target group (Top 5)

**51%**

Primary pupils

**5%**

Foundation/Nursery

**10%**

Parent and Pupil

**8%**

Whole Community

**18%**

Post Primary



### Impact of programmes

(as per monitoring returns by schools)

**79%** % of plans assessed as having full impact

**16%** % of plans assessed as having partial impact

**5%** % of plans cancelled/no impact\*

*\*Note: All funding from cancelled plans is reallocated*

### Meeting policy objectives

(as reported by schools/ clusters)

**98%**

Reducing underachievement (some or strong evidence)

**86%**

Fostering Health and Well Being (some or strong evidence)

**87%**

Improving Life Chances (some or strong evidence)

**84%**

Developing the Integrated Delivery of Support and Services (some or strong evidence)

### SDP Impact

as reported by schools

**81%** Significant Impact on meeting School Development Plan priorities

**19%** Some impact on School Development Plan priorities

### Annual Report returns

**85%**

% of schools that have submitted Annual Report (at 15 Oct 2022)

**76%**

% of clusters that have submitted Annual Reports (at 15 Oct 2022)

### Compliance with CP and Finance regulations

**100%** Child Protection

**100%** Finance

## Education Authority

Number of action plans  
processed through  
[www.NIESIS.org](http://www.NIESIS.org)

2050

School action  
plans

421

Cluster action  
plans



### Induction Support for Schools

**8 schools**

All schools entering the programme  
for the first time receive induction  
support including 1:1 visits



### Monitoring Visits



**44 - 10%**

Number of schools included in the EA monitoring visit  
schedule for 21/22

**16 - 11%**

Number of clusters included in the EA monitoring visits  
schedule for 21/22

EA Delivery Model agreed with DE commits to  
undertaking monitoring visits to 10% of combined  
schools and clusters eligible for full funding in the  
financial year.

- All schools and clusters have a designated Community and Schools Locality Officer as a point of contact and support for their programme.
- Locality Officers also provide additional induction support
- Locality Officers also regularly attend cluster meetings.

## A summary of the recommendations from 2020/21 are set out below

<p><b>Develop support for Parental Engagement in Education through Extended Schools</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of practice (Covid and post Covid) identified. Examples of successful practice identified include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- online engagement</li> <li>- engaging unemployed parents,</li> <li>- engaging working parents</li> <li>- supporting Newcomer parents.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Schools and clusters signposted to support and external providers including Parenting NI, EA Parent Support (Belfast)</li> <li>• Extended Schools Clusters linked into community interagency partnerships to support parents</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amber - partially achieved</b></p>	<p>Current method of sharing practice through direct school contact, cluster meetings, email updates, www.niesis.org and C2k are not making maximum use of good practice information gathered.</p> <p>Need identified to establish a fit for purpose platform for sharing practice re. See recommendation sections</p>
<p><b>Develop blended approach to support in the programme</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic specific support sessions provided online - Special Schools session</li> <li>• Monitoring visits (see above) carried out using blend of in person and online meetings.</li> <li>• Cluster development and support provided online and 'in person' – Community and Schools Team have identified common scenarios to assess most effective support approach while still responding to school requests.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Green - achieved</b></p>	<p>This will continue into 2022/23 including the need to respond to individual school and cluster requests.</p>
<p><b>Co-ordinate programmes and initiatives that target educational disadvantage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and Schools Team Officers have maintained or developed direct links with the following TED partnership groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Fair Start – RED Stakeholders Group</li> <li>- WRAP including Thrive (Newtownabbey)</li> <li>- Full Service Schools</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Regular communication with EA and DE colleagues regards linked programmes including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage – sign posting schools</li> <li>- Healthy Happy Minds (Team Meeting with CYPS colleague to explore joint working)</li> <li>- A Fair Start (Info session on Comms and Schools functions provided for EA SIPs)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• EA Community and Schools Locality Officers better placed to provide point of contact for ES Schools and Cluster navigating the range of TED programmes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Green - achieved</b></p>	<p>Continue in 2022/23</p>
<p><b>Sharing Good Practice</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collated database of good practice examples including those programmes and service addressing emerging Covid need</li> <li>• Examples of practice shared on www.niesis.org.uk, C2k , via email and direct contact with schools.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amber – partially achieved</b></p>	<p>Current method of sharing practice through direct school contact, cluster meetings, email updates and www.niesis.org and C2k are not making maximum use of good practice information gathered.</p> <p>Need identified to establish a fit for purpose platform for sharing practice. See recommendation section.</p>

# 5 Programme Outcomes

**Policy Objective 1 - Reducing Underachievement**

**Policy Objective 2 - Fostering Health and Well Being and Social Inclusion**

**Policy Objective 3 - Improving Life Chances**

**Policy Objective 4 - Developing Integrated Delivery of Support and Services**



## Policy Objective 1: Reducing Underachievement

98% of schools and clusters reported they had 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programme met this objective

### Indicator 1: Improvement attainment including literacy and Numeracy



**96.6%** of schools report "strong" or "some" evidence that their ES programmes improved attainment

#### Examples of practise include:



Ashfield Boys High - GCSE Support  
**Ballysally PS - Academic intervention Programme**  
 Ballykeel PS - Reading Partners Programme  
 Newtownards PS - Catch Up Programme  
 Dundonald HS - Numeracy Support Club

#### FOCUS

**Ballysally PS - After School IAI Programme Provision**  
 After school literacy and numeracy support sessions  
 PTE and PTM scores identify pupils in need

**P2-P7 pupils** attend  
**2x** session per week **X9** weeks

#### OUTCOMES

**46** pupils benefited with **94%** attendance rate

**76%** of pupils attending moved from lower than expected to expected levels or above

### Indicator 2: Improved attendance



Over **83%** of schools and clusters reported that their ES programme provided strong or some evidence of improved attendance as a result of the Extended Schools Programme

#### Examples of programmes include:



Glenveagh Special School - Extra Curricular support  
 Outer West Cluster - Pupil/Parent Programmes  
**Inner East Belfast Cluster - Home School Liaison**  
 Downpatrick Cluster - Attendance Support

#### FOCUS

##### Inner East Belfast Cluster

#### Provision

Home School Liaison Officer works with Pastoral Care team and EWO to support pupils with attendance **<85%**

HSLO contacts parents to establish a home link and can then provide a range of support services including counselling.

#### OUTCOMES

Over **100 families** supported - weekly home visits, school meetings and phone support.

**15 pupils** supported in Ashfield Girls HS improved their attendance.

In Ashfield Boys HS the focus is on providing support for pupils with increased anxiety levels.

**83 pupils** and **12 parents** received support.

### Indicator 3: Removing barriers to learning



**94%** of schools and clusters reported that their ES programme provided 'strong' or 'some' evidence that barriers to learning where removed

#### Examples of programmes include:



**Largymore PS/Lisburn Cluster - Talk Boost**  
 Ballymena Cluster/Castle Tower School - Youth Club  
 Tor Bank School – Music Therapy  
 Newtownards PS – Catch Up Programme

#### FOCUS

##### Largymore PS/Lisburn Cluster - Talk Boost Provision

Community wide initiative led by Early Intervention Lisburn involving cluster schools and partners

Delivery of support for pupils and key messages and training for parents and practitioners

#### OUTCOMES

Largymore PS: **24 pupils** (and parents) participated in the programme and 100% of pupils showed progress in their speech and language progress data.

Across all schools: 92 children completed Early Talk Boost and **98 children** completed Talk Boost.

**410 participants** completed Basic Awareness training with **129 participants** completing Level 1 training.

## Policy Objective 2: Fostering Health and Well Being and Social Inclusion

86% of schools and clusters reported they had 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programme met this objective

### Indicator 1: Increasing physical activity



**67.6%** of schools reported 'strong' evidence that their ES programme led to an increase in physical activity for children, adults and the wider community.

#### Examples of programmes include:

##### *Lisneal College - Badminton Club*

Holy Family PS, Belfast - after school sports  
St Ronan's PS, Lisnaskea - after school sports  
St Mary's College (Derry) - pupil and community classes

#### FOCUS

##### **Lisneal College Badminton Club Community Links Provision**

After school badminton club provided on a weekly basis for pupils.

#### OUTCOME

**27 pupils** participating and have reported improved fitness and confidence levels

School Club now affiliated to Badminton Ireland and Ulster Badminton

Links established with local community clubs with **8 pupils** now completing in tournaments



### Indicator 2: Maximising access to services



**68%** of schools and clusters reported that their ES programme provided 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programmes maximised access to services.

#### Examples of programmes include:

##### *St Johns PS Bligh's Lane - Mindfulness and relaxation*

Bunscoil Phobal Feirste PS - IM Breakfast & After School  
Euston Street PS - Emotional Literacy Training

#### FOCUS

##### **St Johns PS Bligh's Lane - Mindfulness and Relaxation Provision**

Schools prioritised supporting mental health and well-being of pupils. Covid has had a negative impact

School offers a range of programmes - Positive Me, Connected Kids and Relax Kids

Targeted support offered to pupils

**96** pupils attended the clubs

#### OUTCOME

**74%** of pupils surveyed stated that the clubs increased their confidence and **60%** stated that the clubs had improved their mental well being

**19 Yr7** pupils received an accredited certificate from ONC. Ulster Badminton

Teachers have noted that pupils have improved focus and concentration.



### Indicator 3: Developing a better understanding of different cultures & backgrounds



**73.3%** of schools and clusters reported that their ES programme provided 'strong' or 'some' evidence the ES programme helped pupils develop a better understanding of different background and cultures

#### Examples of programmes include:

##### *St John the Baptist College – ESOL Club*

Botanic PS – Wheelworks After School Club  
Clogher Valley Cluster – Love for Life Programme  
St Moninna's PS Cloughoge - 2-3pm club Polish Support

#### FOCUS

##### **St John the Baptist College – ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Club Provision**

**41%** of students in school are Newcomer

Language barrier impacting on access to curriculum and friendships

Before and after school provision where a trained specialist works on oracy, vocabulary and writing schools

#### OUTCOME

**45 pupils** and parents benefited from support

Improved scores across subjects with large numeracy and literacy components:

- Maths / Science / TD = 100%
- English / LLW /RE = 100%

Positive feedback from Parents from Parent Audit. Club is oversubscribed.



## Policy Objective 3 - Improving Life Chances

87% of schools and clusters reported they had 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programme met this objective

**Indicator 1: Supports parents to understand the development needs of their children and/or increased parental or community participation in education.**



**82%** of schools reported 'strong' or 'some' evidence that their ES programme supported parents to better understand the development needs of their children and/or increased parental participation in education.

**Examples of programmes include:**



St Joseph's PS Slate Street Belfast – Journey from Home to School  
**Waterside Cluster – Talk to our Babies**  
Outer North Cluster – Family Support Programme  
Jones Memorial PS - Early Years support for Parents

### FOCUS

#### Waterside Cluster - Talk to our Babies Provision

Cluster works in partnership with **8 community organisations** to deliver a range of programme to help parents support development of their child's language and communication skills.



### OUTCOME

**400 parents** participated in programmes including Rhyme Time and Preparing Your Child for Nursery.

Parents reported gaining new skills and understanding of their child's development milestones.

**4 Newsletters** published

**Indicator 2: Providing opportunities for children to make informed decisions and make a positive contribution to their communities.**



**83%** of schools and clusters reported that their ES programme provided 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programmes provided opportunities for children and young people to make informed decision and contribute positively to their communities.

**Examples of programmes include:**



Portavogie PS – Summer Scheme Community Links  
St Joseph's PS Ederney – School and ECO Council  
Ballymena Cluster – RSE Programme  
**Greater Falls Cluster – Mental Well Being**

### FOCUS

#### Greater Falls Cluster: Mental Well Being Provision

Cluster identified the need for post lockdown support for pupils with regards to emotional support and resilience strategies.

All schools in cluster received a range of support programmes including Ready 4 Anything, Amazing Brains, Tree of Knowledge and Chameleons.

**863 pupils** across **12 primary and post primary** received support.



### OUTCOME

Pupils reported they were able to control emotions, make safe choices and better understand their contributions to the wider community.

Emotional resilience skills implemented across a number of classrooms as whole class strategies.

Teachers reported improved attitudes to learning and positive impacts on attainment.

## Policy Objective 4 - Developing Integrated Delivery of Support and Services

84% of schools and clusters reported they had 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programme met this objective

**Indicator 1: Enabling schools to work closely with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies whose work impacts on education, including neighbourhood renewal groups**



**74%** of schools reported 'strong' or 'some' evidence that their ES programme enabled schools to work closely with statutory and voluntary agencies whose work impacts of education

**Examples of programmes include:**



Killyleagh Cluster - Homestart Programme  
Bloomfield Cluster - Family Support and counselling  
**Downpatrick Cluster - Speech and Language**  
Rathcoole Primary School - Forest School

### FOCUS

#### Downpatrick Cluster - Speech and Language Provision

Speech and language support programmes customised for each nursery school in the cluster including parent support.

WELLCOMM Screening used and support provided by Lets Expand Communication and Small Talk NI

**51 pupils** and **53 parents** received support

### OUTCOME

**50%** of children have now been discharged.

**66%** of children who were 2 or 3 levels below their age bands have improved their scores.

**67%** of children were at their age band or just 1 level below in October 2021.

**81%** of children were at their age band or just 1 level below in May 2022.



**Indicator 2: enhancing and augmenting existing local provision including cluster participation.**



**85%** of schools and clusters reported that their ES programme provided 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programmes enhanced and augmented local provision including cluster participation

**Examples of programmes include:**



**Newtownabbey Cluster - Thrive Boost Programme**

South Armagh - Gardening Club  
Fermanagh 3 Cluster - Cookery and Family Meals  
Strabane Melmount Area Cluster - Support for parents of children with ASD and Downs Syndrome

### FOCUS

#### Newtownabbey Cluster - Thrive "Boost" Programme

#### Provision

Interagency partnership tackling Education Underachievement

Targeted extracurricular support for pupils underachieving in literacy and numeracy

Parental support workshops and home learning support included.

**73 pupils** and **74 parents** benefited from programme in 21-22

### OUTCOME

**89% of 982** literacy and numeracy improvement targets set for pupils were achieved.

**98%** of pupils said they were more confident after participating. 90% felt Boost helped their classwork and homework.

Parents have reported increased confidence in supporting their children's learning





## Introduction

Extended Schools Clusters are a core component of the Extended Schools Programme. Clustering involves schools working together to address the needs of their pupils, parents and communities. Clusters often work in partnership with external organisations including local statutory, voluntary and community organisations. This collaborative approach provides opportunities for school to access additional expertise and resources not available to individual schools in order to improve outcomes.

This section provides a summary of how Extended Schools Clusters operated in 2021/22 and highlights some examples of how clusters achieved these improved outcomes.

### How does the Extended Schools Cluster model work?

Entering into a cluster arrangement is not compulsory but schools are strongly encouraged to do so in order to access the maximum funding available.

Extended Schools Clusters have 3 defined strands as follows:

#### 1. General strand

Each fully eligible school receives an additional 15% funding allocation to provide joint extended schools programmes and services.

#### 2. Parenting strand

Each fully eligible school received an additional 15% funding to provide joint extended schools programmes which have a specific focus in parent support and engagement.

***Schools working in a cluster will combine their allocations from 1 & 2 to make up a cluster budget for the year. Each cluster has a lead school which coordinates the cluster programme. The lead schools will submit action plans and receive the full cluster budget allocation.***

#### 3. Irish Medium Strand

In 2021/22 funding was again made available to those ES Clusters wishing to deliver programmes to promote learning and awareness of the Irish language across schools and communities.

A full list of school and cluster allocations for 2021/22 is available on the DE website [here](#)

## What did Clusters do in 21/22?

Details of cluster provision for 21/22 are set out below

### What is the Extended Schools Cluster Programme - the numbers

#### Number of schools in clusters

**112**

Number of ES Clusters

**30**

Number of Irish Medium Clusters

**142**

Total Number of Clusters

**454**

Number of funded schools in clusters for 21/22

#### Funding

**£988,743** Cluster Funding

**£988,743** Cluster funding - Parenting

**£275,000** Irish Medium Clusters

**£2,252,486** Total Cluster Funding

### What does the Extended Schools Cluster Programme provide?

**421** Number of cluster programmes funded

#### Cluster Activity by time of day (top 3)

**58%** After

**13%** Service

**13%** Day (Adults)

#### Clusters Attendance/participation

**71,758**

Total number of pupils

**28,919**

Total number of parents

**12,048**

Total number of community

#### Range of activities and programmes delivered

Most popular categories of programme

**73**

Parenting/Family Support

**65**

Health and Fitness (including Counselling)

**42**

Language

**36**

Literacy support

## Extended Schools Clusters - What are the outcomes?

Extended Schools Cluster Reports provide evidence of improved outcomes across all four Programme Objectives. The following examples provide an illustration of how clusters deliver improved outcomes through the various funding strands.

<b>Policy Objective</b>	Improving Life Chances
<b>Cluster Strand</b>	Parenting
<b>Cluster Name</b>	Little Voice 2– Edenderry NS (Lead School)
<b>Cluster Programme</b>	Home Learning Packs
<b>Budget</b>	£7000

### Programme Summary

#### Need

##### *Covid Isolation impact:*

- *Children - development delays*
- *Parents - anxiety and uncertainty over their children's well-being and development.*

#### Delivery

- Home learning packs were prepared using a range of resources and provided to all families of **208** pupils across **4 Nursery schools**.
- Parents supported their children's development through a range of activities including movement, reading bedtime stories, art and craft, cookery
- Parents learned about developmental milestones and were encouraged to share experiences on social media platforms (school Facebook pages, SEESAW)

#### Outcomes

Staff from the cluster schools reported

- Parents had improved confidence and self-esteem
- Parents confirmed they had better understanding of their child's development and were better able to identify opportunities to support learning in the home environment. E.g. through play.

#### **Policy Objective** - Reducing Underachievement

#### **Cluster Strand** - Irish Medium

#### **Cluster Name** - Outer North Irish Medium Cluster Thornhill College (Lead School)

#### **Cluster Programme** - Range of Irish Language support programmes across the cluster schools including

- Enhancing Irish Language for Primary Pupils
- Enhancing Irish Language for Post Primary Pupils
- Irish College Scholarships
- Enhancing Irish Language for Parents

**Budget** - £10000

### Programme Summary

#### Need

*Promoting the Irish Language at a time when Covid has impacted on accessibility to support. Gaeltacht courses were cancelled due to Covid.*

#### Delivery (included)

- Range of language, music and other cultural activities across primary schools in the cluster.
- Additional extra-curricular support for KS 3 and KS 4 pupils including a 'Cúrsa Gaeltachta' for A level Student.
- Community Irish Language Course for Parents

#### Outcomes

- **350** primary school pupils participated in a range of programmes.
- **103** Yr10 students passed their 'Fáinne Airgid' speaking examination which encouraged confidence, enjoyment, attainment and fluency in spoken Irish. **98** of these pupils have since decided to progress to GCSE Irish.
- Cluster Schools reported that the programme contributed to improved academic achievement in Irish Language as follows:
  - **14%** of **A2 students** achieved an A\* grade; **71%** an A\*-A grade and **95%** an A\*-B grade. **100%** A-C grade was achieved
  - At **AS level**, **72%** of students achieved an A grade and 100% gained an A-B grade – '...a magnificent achievement'
  - **GCSE results** were really excellent with 83% gaining an A\*-A grade and **96%** an A\*-B grade. **100%** achieved A\*-C. Target Setting and supportive intervention was again a great success. 3 Year 9 IMES students gained an A\* grade at GCSE level.

**Policy Objective** - Reducing Underachievement (barriers to learning) & Integrated Delivery of Services

**Cluster Strand** - General

**Cluster Name** - Antrim - Roundtower PS (Lead School)

**Cluster Programme** - Pupils and Family Counselling Programme

**Budget** - £11,200

## Programme Summary

### Need

- *High demand for counselling support for mental health for pupils and parents across the cluster area*
- *Impact of Covid noted and has increased the level of need.*

### Delivery

- ES Cluster has co-ordinated a range of funding streams including Health Happy Minds (DE) to meet demand
- One to one sessions with professional counsellor for pupils and parents through referral system
- **50 pupils** and **20 parents** received support
- Confidential records retained at school

### Outcomes

- Cluster was able to meet demand for services through a co-ordinated approach
- Positive feedback from pupils and parents regarding the service. For example One parent described the counsellor who provided support as a “superhero”
- Positive feedback from staff on the impact of the service.

## Extended Schools Cluster in 2021-22 – Covid Impact

This element of the Extended Schools programme has been impacted significantly by the Covid pandemic. Two issues of note in 2021/22 have been noted below:

### Health and Well Being

Elsewhere in this report it has been noted that Health and Well Being, and in particular mental health, has been one of the major emerging needs facing schools post Covid. Extended Schools Clusters have provided a platform for many schools to access programmes and services to support pupils in this area and the parenting funding stream has also allowed schools to provide a ‘wraparound’ family support service. Support provided by clusters spans the ranges from universal programmes such as extra-curricular mindfulness and relaxation classes for pupils through to targeted intervention support such as counselling provision for pupils and parents.

While the innovative use of Extended Schools funding to address these complex needs is to be welcomed as a success of the programme it should be noted that school/cluster annual reports contain much anecdotal evidence to suggest that the demand facing schools for this type of support is hugely challenging and shows no signs of easing. The EA Community and Schools Team has liaised with colleagues in CYPs and DE’s Early Years, Children and Youth Directorate to ensure that up to date advice is provided to clusters to maximise the use of a number of Health and Well Being funding streams.

### ES Cluster structure and function

As noted in the 2020/21 Extended Schools Annual Report the Covid pandemic mitigated against cluster working for obvious reasons. Schools, understandably, focussed attention on the safety of their own pupils and staff. Despite this clusters were able to find innovative ways to provide shared programmes (often online) during this period. In some cases clusters focused on purchasing resources as a way of future proofing their cluster provision.

In 2021/22 individual schools have transitioned seamlessly back to face to face extended schools delivery however for a small number of clusters this has proved more of a challenge. Reasons vary as to why this is the case and may include increased workloads preventing the required planning time needed to “reset” a cluster or an increased focus on other school partnership arrangements.

Recommendations regarding how schools can be supported to develop clusters are included in the next section.

The 2021/22 Extended Schools Programme provided delivery of a wide range of much needed support to pupils, parents and communities in areas of social disadvantage. Schools (and clusters) deserve huge credit for the way in which pre-Covid (face to face) support was re-introduced as the year progressed despite the challenges faced. It is also clear from analysis of the 2021/22 programmes that schools effectively used the flexibility of the Extended Schools Programme to respond to emerging needs arising from the Covid pandemic and were able to combine multiple funding streams and programmes to do so. The recent cost of living increase will continue to have a more adverse impact on pupils and families in more disadvantaged areas and the demand for Extended Schools programmes and services will arguably be greater than at any time since its launch in 2006.

### Challenges

Despite the success of the programme in 2021/22 a number of challenges were noted and these will continue to impact on the Extended Schools programme in 2022/23 and beyond. These include:

### Budget

A combination of factors which are placing increasing pressure on the ES budgets at individual school level.

- When paying staff using the ES hourly rates, Schools must now factor in an additional 47% contribution to cover statutory employer contribution costs.
- While the ES budget has remained at the same level for a number of years the recent increases in inflation mean the budget is experiencing a net reduction year on year.
- Although schools have always been permitted to factor in utility and other costs such as transport into ES action plans, a majority of schools would usually have absorbed these costs into day to day (LMS) running costs. Analysis of recently submitted action plans indicates that this is starting to change.

These factors mean there will be a drop in the volume of the Extended Schools programmes and services delivered and it is inevitable that some valuable services will be discontinued.

### Covid Impact

As referenced elsewhere in this report the impact of Covid will continue to present schools with challenges. These include dealing with the changing and increasingly complex needs of pupils and their families in the context of significant pressures on wider public services which impact on education attainment (e.g. Health services). In the short term the ES programme has provided schools with the flexibility to meet gaps in provision due to shortages elsewhere in the system however this is not sustainable in the long run.

### EA Support

Support for Extended Schools will continue to be provided by the EA Community and Schools Team. The current delivery model ensures the programme is delivered according to basic policy requirements but there is an increasing risk that the level of development support provided to schools is not sufficient to maximise outcomes.

### Supporting the development of Extended Schools Clusters

The impact of Covid plus the increasing range of similar partnership arrangements available to schools requires a number of actions to support the development of clusters.

#### Extended Schools clusters:

- Extended Schools should be encouraged to review their cluster arrangements and supported to restructure should doing so improve effectiveness.
- There are a number of partnership and clustering options for schools including Shared Education Partnerships, Pathways into Partnerships and Area Learning Communities. EA Community and Schools Team will work with colleagues within the Education Directorate to ensure these cluster arrangements are complementary and maximise outcomes for pupils.
- The EA Community and Schools Team will review and update Extended Schools Cluster Guidance doc. This update should be informed by recent best practice from other partnership programmes (as above)

### Maximising Potential of Good Practice

A significant bank of good practice resource is available with regards to Extended Schools Programme. This information is contained in collated annual report databases, monitoring visit records and individual schools and cluster websites but the communication of this good practice should be improved.

- The EA Community and Schools Team will develop an appropriate online platform for promoting and sharing this good practice to schools and clusters in an easily accessible format



