**ea** Education Authority

# Extended Schools Programme Annual Report 2022-2023

SECURING OUR FUTURE

Extended Schools
schools, families, communities
– working together

# Contents

# 1 Executive Summary

This report provides summary information and an evaluation of the 2022- 23 financial year which is the 17th 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 22/23.

In 2022/23 the Department of Education (DE) provided £8.948m to a total of 479 schools and 150 clusters to deliver on 2,522 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 41% 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. This flexibility allows schools and clusters to respond to the changing needs of pupils (and families) which are a result of wider societal issues. The impact of covid on the health and well-being of pupils meant that schools continued to prioritise support in this area and the increasing severity of the cost-of-living squeeze meant a continued emphasis on programmes such as Breakfast clubs which provide basic services that ensure children are ready to learn.

Chapter 4 provides a summary of the benefits of the programme including the numbers of pupils and parents who participated in ES programmes. This chapter also provides details of the support provided by the Education Authority's Community and Schools Team with responsibility for managing the delivery of the programme across schools.

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

Clustering has been a core element of the programme since its inception in 2006 and additional funding strands have been added to the cluster programmes since then. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of how Extended Schools clusters operated during 2022/23 as well as the main benefit and development areas for 2023/24 and beyond.

The report 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 includes a number of challenges facing the programme moving forward as well as recommendations for continued development into 2023/24 and beyond.

# 2 | Background to the Extended Schools Programme

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 22/23

## 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 2022/23 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;
  - WRAP
- Healthy Happy Minds – Counselling and Therapeutic support for primary school pupils
- Engage Project – teaching support to address the adverse impact of Covid.

**Covid**
2022/23 marked the first full year of the Extended Schools Programme post pandemic. The long-term effects of covid on pupils (and wider society) are yet to be fully identified however trends identified in the 2021/22 ES Programme Annual Report continued into 2022/23. These included an increasing focus of provision on Health and Well Being, the need to re-engage parents and an increased focus on attendance. Further details are included in this report.

**Cost of living**
The Extended Schools Report for 2021/22 noted that there were indications that schools and clusters were beginning to move the focus of their provision to reflect cost of living pressures. This included an increase in the number of food related provision (e.g. Breakfast Clubs). This trend has continued into 2022/23.

## 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 2023. 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 **29 November 2023** as follows:

- School Annual Reports: 84% of schools have completed an Annual Report
- Cluster Annual Reports: 78% of clusters have completed an Annual Report

The return rate of Annual Reports from schools and clusters, while still high, has reduced from the same point in 2021/22. At the time of writing this report a small number of schools indicated that due to action short of strike they would not be submitting an Annual Report for 2022/23. It is likely that this is the main reason why return rates are slightly down.

It is also worth noting that as the programme moved into 2023/24 a significant number of schools who "exited" the programme have not submitted an Annual Report. For the first time these schools did not receive exiting funds (previously this was 25%) so there has been little incentive for these schools to complete their Annual Report.

**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 an Extended School?**

**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 an Extended School?

**"An Extended School provides a range of services and activities sometimes during or beyond the school day to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community . . ."**

### Eligible schools 22/23

**479** Number of Schools receiving funding (inc. exiting schools)

**442** Number of Schools receiving full funding

**11** Number of schools receiving 50% funding (falling just short of the eligibility criteria)

**10** Number of exiting schools – 25% funding for April - June)

**16** Number of new schools receiving full funding

**150** Number of clusters (Includes 30 IMES Clusters)

**41%** of schools in NI receiving ES funding

### Eligible schools by phase

**304** Primary Schools

**76** Number of Post Primary Schools

**61** Number of Nursery Schools

**38** Number of Special Schools

**£5,458** Average/typical* allocation to nursery schools

**£13,940** Average allocation to primary schools

**£12,438** Average allocation to special schools

**£21,630** Average allocation to post primary

* Allocations are pro-rata to school enrolment

### Funding

**£9.148m** Total Funding

**£6.687m** Individual school allocations

**£993k** Cluster Funding

**£993k** Cluster funding - Parenting

**£275k** Irish Medium Clusters

**£200k** EA admin support

Full details of the allocations are available on the DE website: List of Extended Schools 22/23

# What does the Extended Schools Programme provide?

## Action Plans submitted and approved

### 2074
**Number of school programmes funded**

### 448
**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
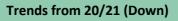
**292** Health and Fitness

**256** Literacy

**196** Parenting/Family

### Trends from 2021/22 (Up)

**+5.8% (+10)** Breakfast Club

**+60% (+12)** Summer Schools

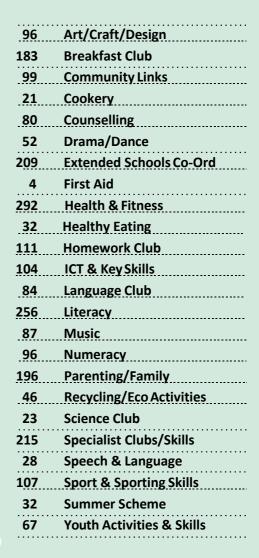**+ 12% (+3)** Speech & Language

**+8% (+5)** Youth Activities

### Trends from 20/21 (Down)

**-4% (-10)** Literacy

**-9.4% (-10)** Numeracy

**-4.3% (-40)** Parenting/Family

**-8% (-7)** Counselling

| | |
|---|---|
| 96 | Art/Craft/Design |
| 183 | Breakfast Club |
| 99 | Community Links |
| 21 | Cookery |
| 80 | Counselling |
| 52 | Drama/Dance |
| 209 | Extended Schools Co-Ord |
| 4 | First Aid |
| 292 | Health & Fitness |
| 32 | Healthy Eating |
| 111 | Homework Club |
| 104 | ICT & Key Skills |
| 84 | Language Club |
| 256 | Literacy |
| 87 | Music |
| 96 | Numeracy |
| 196 | Parenting/Family |
| 46 | Recycling/Eco Activities |
| 23 | Science Club |
| 215 | Specialist Clubs/Skills |
| 28 | Speech & Language |
| 107 | Sport & Sporting Skills |
| 32 | Summer Scheme |
| 67 | Youth Activities & Skills |

# Summary of Main Programme Trends and Benefits for 2022/23

The table above provides an overview of the wide range of programmes that below summarises the main benefits that the Extended Schools Programme 2022/23 has provided as well as delivery trends. This information is based on analysis of the Annual Reports provided by schools.

## Pupils

Almost 94% of schools and clusters rated the benefits of their Extended Schools Programme to be "Very Good"

Most common benefits listed included

- **Provision of services to remove barriers to learning:** In 2022/23 there was an increase in the number of schools providing services to directly address costs of living pressures. This includes provision of subsidised food through breakfast clubs. More schools are referencing the need to support working families.
- **Improved Health, Well Being and Resilience -** as well as physical activity programmes including sports to improve fitness levels, pupils have benefited from access to activities which promote mental health and well being. Schools use group-based therapies including Art, Music and Play.
- **Enhanced Learning opportunities leading to improved attainment -** A diverse range of programmes and activities across the curriculum have led to improved attainment and the development of new skills.
- **Increased Confidence and Self Esteem -** through engagement in a diverse range of activities beyond the curriculum. Positive feedback from teachers and coaches, contribute to a sense of accomplishment.

## Schools

The benefits to schools were rated as either "Very Good" (88%) or "Good"(11%).

Most common benefits listed included

- **Academic Improvement:** Many pupils participating in the programme have made progress, with increasing scores in literacy, numeracy, and ICT standards. increased confidence among pupils has led to improved performance in various subjects. There is also an increased focus on attendance with schools commenting that covid has impacted on attendance levels.
- **Behavioural and Well-being Improvements:** Improved pupil focus, confidence, and attitude towards school. Positive impact on mental health and well-being, especially post-pandemic, through extracurricular activities as well as intervention support such as Counselling & Speech and Language support. Schools have also provided training for staff to provide well-being and resilience programmes.
- **Community Engagement:** Promotion of the school within the wider community. Increased parental engagement through a range of cluster programmes as well as a positive community perception of the school as a hub of activity.
- **Extended Learning Opportunities:** Enriched curriculum through a variety of extracurricular activities. Opportunities for after-school clubs and programmes, providing students with a more holistic learning experience. Increased access to specialist tutors, coaches, and resources.

## Parents

Over 90% of schools and clusters rated the benefits to parents as "Very Good" or "Good"

Most common benefits listed included

- **Increased Confidence and Skills:** Parents reported feeling more confident in their approaches to supporting their children's learning (e.g. Homework).
- **Improved Communication and Engagement:** Parents are more engaged with the school and are more involved in tracking their child's progress. ICT Platforms such as Seesaw help with communication.
- **Enhanced Work-Life Balance:** Parents appreciated the support provided by extended school days and after-school clubs. This support allowed them to manage work schedules more efficiently and spend quality time with their children.
- **Community Building and Social Support:** The programmes facilitated the development of strong links among parents. They actively participated in various activities, workshops, and social gatherings, creating a supportive school community.

## Community

While 77% of schools and clusters rated the benefits of the programme as either "Very Good" or "Good", 19% rated the benefits as average with 3% rating the benefits as "poor"

Most common benefits listed included

- **Enhanced Community Engagement:** Working with other organisations in the community including neighbouring schools has strengthened community bonds. Events and community outreach programmes raise the profile of the school in the local community.
- **Increased access to Facilities and Services:** Opening of facilities for evening classes, after-school sports and youth clubs provide a valuable resource for the wider community.
- **Community Cohesion:** Showcasing events like school concerts, intergenerational work and environmental initiatives promote community cohesion. Media coverage and social media engagement promotes a positive image of education.
- **Opportunities for Families:** School and clusters provide a range of educational, recreational and social support programmes and services which have positively impacted on families.

# School and Cluster Programme Delivery

## Attendance/participation

**244,957**
Total number of pupils

**95,013**
Total number of parents

**36,584**
Total number of community

**-1.6%    -4,166**
% change in attendance from 21-22 Pupils

**+11.5%    +9,848,**
% change in attendance from 21-22 Parents

**+8.3%    +2,828**
% change in attendance from 21-22 Community

## Who benefits
**Activities by target group (Top 5)**

**53%** Primary pupils

**6%** Foundation/Nursery

**9%** Parent and Pupil

**7%** Whole Community

**19%** Post Primary

## Meeting policy objectives
(as reported by schools/ clusters)

**99% (+1%)**
Reducing underachievement (some or strong evidence)

**90% (+4%)**
Fostering Health and Well Being (some or strong evidence)

**92% (+5%)**
Improving Life Chances (some or strong evidence)

**92% (+8%)**
Developing the Integrated Delivery of Support and Services (some or strong evidence)

## Impact of programmes
(as per monitoring returns by schools)

**87%** of plans assessed as having full impact

**10%** of plans assessed as having partial impact

**1.5%** of plans cancelled/no impact*

*Note: All funding from cancelled plans is reallocated

## Compliance with CP and Finance regulations

**100% Child Protection**
**100% Finance**

## SDP Impact
as reported by schools

**90%** Significant Impact on meeting School Development Plan priorities *(+9% from 2021/22)

**10%** Some impact on School Development Plan priorities

## Annual Report returns
**84%**
% of schools that have submitted Annual Reports (on 30 Nov 2023)

**78%**
% of clusters that have submitted Annual Reports (at 30 Nov 2023)

# Education Authority

## Number of action plans processed through www.NIESIS.org

**2074**

School action plans

**448**

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

**34**

Number of schools included in the EA monitoring visit schedule for 22/23

**16**

Number of clusters included in the EA monitoring visits schedule for 22/23

**13**

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. Some visits were cancelled due to ASOS and funding uncertainty in April 2023

## Support for Extended Schools and Clusters

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

Newly appointed Principals and Extended Schools Co-ordinators also receive induction support.

Community and Schools Locality Officers attend Cluster meetings - and on request will support a cluster review process.

Sharing effective practice across schools and clusters.

# 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
## 99% of schools and clusters reported they had 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programme met this objective

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

**89% of schools report "strong" or "some" evidence that their ES programmes improved attainment**

**Examples of programmes include:**
Ballykeel PS - Reading Partners Programme
Galliagh NS - Speech and Language Support
Newtownards PS - Catch Up Programme Dundonald
HS - Numeracy Support Club

**FOCUS**
**Galliagh NS - Speech and Language Support**
Increasing number of children below their age-appropriate levels and an increase in health service waiting list. School employs qualified therapist part time to assess need, provide support and support staff with IEPS/SEN reports and advise parents.

**OUTCOMES**
All **52 pupils** and their parents have received support through the programme. By end of year **86% of pupils** were screened at age-appropriate levels (from baseline **50%** measured using Wellcomm Toolkit). A further **9%** were only 1 section behind.

### Indicator 2: Improved attendance

**Over 97% 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:**
Integrated College Glengormley - Positive Behaviour Programme
Ashfield Girls' High - Home School Liaison Officer
St Olcan's Primary School - Breakfast Club
St Louise's Comprehensive - Occupational Therapist

**FOCUS**
**St Olcan's Primary School - Targeted Breakfast club**
The school identifies children with a pattern of below average attendance and poor punctuality. These children are encouraged to attend Breakfast club. After breakfast pupils have access to Mathletics and Reading Eggs and can also go outside for fresh air and exercise before class starts.

**OUTCOMES**
Average of **18-20 pupils** attending the breakfast club daily. Improved attendance for **90% of all pupils** targeted for support.

Evaluation from parents indicated pupils are more eager to attend school in the morning and pupils have said they are more able to concentrate.

### 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:**
Inner East (Belfast) Cluster - EAL Support
St Paul's PS Slievemore - Families Connect
Strabane 5 Cluster - Breakfast Club (inc LAC)
St Terese's PS Belfast - Summer (Transition) Programme
Arvalee School - Outdoor Education to support TSPC

**FOCUS**
**Inner East (Belfast) Cluster- EAL Support**
Range of programmes and services to provide support to children and families with English as an additional language. Nursery, primary and post primary schools delivered tailored programmes including structured language exercises and fun activities.

**OUTCOMES**
A total of **130** pupils received support. **48 post primary pupils** (2 schools), **22 primary pupils** (3 schools) and **60 nursery pupils** (2 schools)

Pupils progress tracked against Common European Framework with pupils progressing to achieve B1 (minimum requirement for participation in class) and B2 (level considered to perform appropriately in important examinations). Teachers noted **improved confidence** in class and increased ability to access the curriculum

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

**90% of schools and clusters reported they had 'strong' or 'some' evidence their programme met this objective**

## Indicator 1: Increasing physical activity

**70% 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:**
St Mary's PS Cabra - After Schools Gardening Club
Lisnagarvey HS - Pupil/Community Sports provision
TACT Cluster (Colin area) - Post 16 coaching
Upper Killeavy Cluster - Bushcraft Outdoor Learning

**FOCUS**
**St Catherine's PS (Strabane) - After Schools Sports including Rugbytots**
PE identified as SDP priority and after schools sports reviewed to reflect actions.
Nursery to yr 4 - focus on participation including RugbyTots Programme.

**OUTCOMES**
Increased participation with **200 pupils** participating after school throughout the year.
Extra clubs provided to cope with demand.
Pupil evaluations confirmed the success of the programme and improved staff noted the skills development of the pupils.

## Indicator 2: Maximising access to services

**Over 97% 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:**
Integrated College Glengormley - Positive Behaviour Programme
Ashfield Girls' High - Home School Liaison Officer
St Olcan's Primary School - Breakfast Club
St Louise's Comprehensive - Occupational Therapist

**FOCUS**
**Bloomfield (Bangor) Cluster - Family Support and Counselling Service**
Five cluster schools prioritised supporting mental health and well-being of pupils.
Range of programmes - 1:1 counselling for pupils, group work focussing on priority issues including bereavement, bullying.
1:1 support for parents and group work with P1 intake group and P7 transition group.
Staff Training provided.

**OUTCOMES**
**91 pupils** received one to one counselling support and there were 186 parental engagements.
Pupils assessed through CORS or YCORS and significant improvement noted. The majority of children had a fall in SDQ (mental health indicators) scores.
Schools have reported a reduction of incidents of disruptive behaviour.

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

**82% 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 Aloysuis PS (Lisburn) Cluster – Intergenerational Cultural Diversity Event
Breda Academy – EAL Lunchtime Clubs
IMES Dundonald Cluster – Irish Language Classes

**FOCUS**
**Greater Fall Cluster – Newcomer Support Programme**
Cluster Schools have a growing number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. For many of these pupils' language acquisition is a barrier to learning. In partnership with Full Service Community Support Network additional training was provided to CELT Tutors and Classroom Assistants.
The trained staff were then able to support pupils across the cluster directly as well as engage parents to support their children's learning.

**OUTCOMES**
**20 classroom assistants** completed a 6-week course and are now able to provide support to pupils.
**150 pupils** and **50 parents** across 5 primary schools and 2 post primary schools received support
There was a significant rise in pupil CEFR (Common Framework of References for Languages) Scores.
Positive feedback from parents who welcome the opportunity to engage with the school and the school community.

# Policy Objective 3 - Improving Life Chances

92% 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.**

**88.5%** 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:**
Ballykeel PS - Parent Communication
Christ The Redeemer PS - Parents Lodge
Brookfield School – Parental Fair
Coalisland Area Cluster- Parent Training

**FOCUS**
**Brookfield School - Parental Fair**
School identified challenge of re-engaging parents on school site after Covid which shifted focus to online engagement.
School held Parental Fair event aimed at encouraging parents to come to the school. School council pupils participated in organising and supporting the fair.

**OUTCOMES**
**90 parents** attended the event and were able to access support and services from 19 different agencies.

Feedback from parents attending the day was very positive.
**60+ families** have now received additional support regarding medical, behavioural and emotional needs of children concerned.

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

**89.3%** 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:**
Lisneal College - Environmental and Business Programmes
Ballymoney 2 Cluster - Science (Green Energy) Project
St Patrick's and St Brigid's PS Ballycastle - ECO Club
Trench Road NS - Forest Schools Programme

**FOCUS**
**Bessbrook & Area Cluster – Internet Safety workshops**
A series of Internet Safety Fundamentals Workshops were provided to pupils across the cluster schools during Internet Safety Week in Feb 2022. A follow up set of workshops was also provided to all students which covered Cyberbullying, Stranger Danger, Social Networking Safely and Creating a Positive Digital Footprint
A practical session for parents was also delivered and this covered parental controls, dealing with cyber bullying and social networking sites.

**OUTCOMES**
**505 pupils** across **8 schools** (1 post primary and 7 primary) attended **11 workshops** and then **11 follow up workshops**.
The workshops were very successful. Schools reported that they improved pupils' knowledge of how to use the Internet safely and also helped parents develop their understanding of how young people are impacted by its use. The Cluster have already planned to deliver the sessions again in 2023/24.

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

92% 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**

**79%** 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:**
Lugan Cluster - Pupil and Parents Well Being Programmes
NAMES (Newry & Mourne) Cluster - Community Group Support
Omagh 2 - Well Being Fair
Upper Springfield Cluster - Networking Events

**FOCUS**
**Lurgan Cluster - Pupil and Parents Well Being**
The Cluster has worked with the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership to engage voluntary and community organisations to provide much needed services to improve well-being of pupils and parents. These include counselling provision for pupils (Barnardo's Time 4 Me Programme) and parent support programmes (Parenting NI).

**OUTCOMES**
 **22 pupils** (and families) received counselling support. Pupils were tracked from being in the clinically distressed zone to being within the normal range after the intervention was provided.

Parenting NI provided a range of workshops to support parents. A total of **20 parents a**ttended. As well as benefiting from the sessions schools have reported better links with parents.

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

**92%** 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:**
Moneymore Cluster - Transition Project
Limavady 3 Cluster - Saturday Club
Newtownabbey Special Schools - Counselling Service
Strabane (Evish/Altishane/Donemana) - Forest Walk Programme

**FOCUS**
**Enniskillen Town Cluster - Wellbeing Programme**
Cluster schools identified need to support health and well being for pupils and families post covid. One of the programmes delivered was the Forest Walk Programme. The cluster schools designed a programme of curriculum linked daily activities that could be undertaken in local National Trust venues. The cluster subsidised the cost of entry to these venues to encourage families to use the facilities.

**OUTCOMES**
The schools reported that the programme was a *"resounding success"* as it encouraged pupils and their families to use the National Trust venues. The National Trust retained attendance records and **160 pupils** and **60 parents** from the cluster participated in the programme. Evaluation from families confirmed the positive impact of the programme including improved physical health, improved family relationships and a better understanding of nature. Parents who were not aware of and had never used the venues continue to use them on a regular basis.

# 6 Extended School Clusters

## 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 sections provides a summary of how Extended Schools Clusters operated in 2022/23 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 however 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 2022/23 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 2022/23 is available on the DE website. Extended Schools  - List of Schools 2022-23

# What did Clusters do in 22/23?

Details of cluster provision for 22/23 are set out below

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

### Number of schools in clusters

**117**
Number of ES Clusters

**30**
Number of Irish Medium Clusters

**147**
Total Number of Clusters

**499**
Number of funded schools in clusters for 22/23

### Funding

**£993,189** Cluster Funding

**£993,189** Cluster funding - Parenting

**£275,000** Irish Medium Clusters

**£2,261,378** Total Cluster Funding

## What does the Extended Schools Cluster Programme provide?

**448** Number of cluster programmes funded

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

**56%** After

**14%** Service

**11%** Day (Adults)

### Clusters Attendance/ participation

**69,366**
Total number of pupils

**27,917**
Total number of parents

**69,366**
Total number of community

### Range of activities and programmes delivered

(see activity category table)

Most popular categories of programme

**71**
Parenting/Family Support

**64**
Health and Fitness
(including Counselling)

**46**
Language Club

**35**
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.

**Policy Objective** - Integrated Delivery of Services
**Cluster Strand** - Parent Support
**Cluster Name** - Waterside cluster
**Cluster Programme** - Parenting Programme and Summer Provision
**Budget** - £36,675 (other programmes funded)

## Programme Summary

**Need**
Consultation process with parents and the local community identified the need to include the following in the ES Cluster provision.
• Parent Support - Early years.
• Summer provision for children - parents concerned about possible isolation during the summer break.

**Delivery**
• **Parent Support:** 7 Community organisations delivered 8-week support programme for parents of pre-school pupils. 84 parents (and children) participated. Focus on awareness of play, managing behaviour and language development.
• **Summer Scheme** - cluster schools partnered with community organisations to deliver structured programmes during July and August. 500 pupils attended the programme which focused on promoting physical and mental well-being. 45 Parents volunteered during the Summer Programme.

**Outcomes**
• **Parent Support:** Parents reported better knowledge of development milestones and the importance of play and reading on development. Parents also commented that their children were more ready for starting Nursery.
• **Summer Programmes:** Evaluation of the programme confirmed that the opportunity to interact with peers had a number of benefits including improved behaviour and pupils being generally more settled at home and when they returned to school. Parents reported that "screen time" was reduced and their children had increased friendship circles.

**Policy Objective** – Reducing Underachievement
**Cluster Strand -** General
**Cluster Name** - Outer North Cluster - Greater Shantallow Area Partnership (Lead)
**Cluster Programme** - Range of programmes across the cluster schools focusing on Reducing Underachievement*.
**Budget -** £64,748*
*The cluster also delivered programme focusing on other policy objectives

## Programme Summary

**Need**
Focus on reducing educational underachievement across the cluster schools.

**Delivery (included)**
- Targeted additional **literacy and numeracy** support for primary and post primary pupils - Yearn to Learn Programme.
- Programmes aimed to remove **barriers to learning** including Counselling and Mentoring Services, "Aspire (NI)" programme which is a personal development programme for YR 8 pupils and "Play Together Learn Together" which is an early years parent and child focusing on communication and language skills.
- Speech and Language Therapy support provided to 14 pre-school and primary school settings across the cluster.
- Story Sack Programme to assist with early years language development and encourage children and their parents to create and sustain an interest in books.

**Outcomes**
- 195 primary school pupils and 40 post primary pupils received additional literacy and numeracy support through the Yearn to Learn programme. As well as improved attainment levels teachers noted increased levels of confidence for those pupils who participated. Feedback from one cluster school was as follows "The children were reluctant readers, and some had dyslexic tendencies. On completion of the sessions, we saw an improvement in their scores. Child A's SWRT scores went from 38 to 41, with their SWST scores improving from 14 to 21. Child B's SWRT scores went from 8 to 19 and their SWST scores went from 5 to 15.  2 other children improved in their confidence and attainment through 'booster' sessions"
- 490 Yr8 students participated in the Aspire (NI) Programme. The programme built on foundation literacy and numeracy skills in a fun and interactive environment.  Tutor assessments confirmed improvements in literacy and numeracy skills.
- 21 Parents attended the Play Together Learn Together Programme with their children.
- 50 Parents and children used the Story Sack Programme. Parents reported that their children's communication skills improved. As a result of the programme the ES Co-ordinator provided information sessions across local schools and libraries to use story sacks at home.
- 357 pupils from 14 organisations undertook 336 hours of speech therapy. Progress in language and communication skills were recorded for individual pupils.

**Policy Objective** –Improving Life Chances
**Cluster Strand** – Irish Medium/Parenting
**Cluster Nam**e – IMES Upper Springfield Cluster - Gaelscoil na Mona PS (Lead School)
**Cluster Programme** – Parent Support Network
**Budget** - £10,000

## Programme Summary

**Need**
- Cluster schools supporting parents to help with their children's education including homework support.
- Focus of support on understanding how to support children with Special Educational Needs as well as Emotional Health and Well Being issues.

**Delivery**
- Parents attend a series of workshops on identified subjects including
  - Special Educational Needs
  - Emotional Health and Well Being (Building Resilience in Children)
  - Numeracy/Literacy Support at home (e.g. Accelerated Reader)
- Local library used as venue for sessions.

**Outcomes**
- Over 300 parents have benefitted from the programme.
- Feedback from parents indicated that they are better able to manage completion of homework with their children through setting boundaries.
- Cluster schools reported that attendance for some pupils improved due to reduced levels of stress at home.
- A SEN Parent Support Group has been established.

# Extended Schools Cluster in 2022-23 - Benefit Summary and Development Areas

In 2022/23 there were almost 450 cluster programmes provided across 150 clusters. These programmes are designed to meet local need therefore there is a wide range of activities and programmes provided . The following summary table is not exhaustive but provides a summary of the main trends and development areas.

## General

- **Health and Well Being - post covid**
  This has been an increasing priority for clusters post covid. As well as provision of programmes to promote physical fitness there has also been a collective (area based) approach to providing services which support mental health. These range from individual intervention support such as counselling through to group work services aimed at building resilience.

- **Literacy Support**
  Literacy initiatives such as Reading Partnerships, Accelerated Reading (and similar IT based packages) and book clubs are regularly provided by clusters. Clusters are encouraged to identify common (SDP) Themes when planning delivery for the year and Literacy is one of the more common needs identified by clusters.

- **Community Relationships**
  While schools have developed individual links with their communities, the collective approach that ES clustering provides offers a further platform for community engagement. In more effective clusters the cluster co-ordinator establishes links with the local community to identify and respond to community needs. Services such as counselling and family support, which schools often struggle to provide individually, can be provided through a collective approach and sometimes in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector.

## Parent Strand

- **Parental Involvement in Learning**
  A range of approaches have been used to engage parents ranging from formal training through to informal meetings and events. In the best examples clusters respond to the needs of parents rather than providing what the school thinks that parents need. Feedback from Cluster Annual Reports indicates that programmes where parents participate in activities alongside their children are particularly successful.

- **Integration of Technology**
  The use of online (learning) platforms and communication apps such as SeeSaw across cluster groups has been an effective way to communicate with and engage parents.

- **Community Engagement**
  The involvement of parents in community events, clubs, and workshops not only benefits individual families but also strengthens the overall school-community relationship

## Irish Medium Strand

- **Enhanced Language Skills and Cultural Awareness**
  Irish Medium Clusters have reported that additional programmes have contributed to enhancing language skills for pupils. This ranges from nursery age through to post primary. Clusters have used music programmes, school concerts and community events to promote cultural awareness.

- **Increased Confidence and Engagement**
  Speaking Irish in an out of school environment has boosted the confidence of pupils. The involvement of parents in after-school clubs (such as homework support) and events has helped parents support their children and increased engagement with (cluster) schools.

- **Community Engagement**
  IMES Clusters have worked in partnership to deliver and participate in community events , Summer programmes and other Irish Language initiatives such as Seachtain na Gaeilge . As well as promoting the Irish Language this approach increased community engagement.

## Development Areas - Clusters

- **Strategic Planning**
Covid impacted on how ES clusters operate. Out of necessity, delivery of support often required that schools in the cluster divide up cluster funds to offer school specific support. Coming out of Covid most clusters reverted to a focus on maintaining working relationships across the cluster schools and the local community. A collective approach is adopted to identifying and responding to need. This approach also ensures that the cluster is better placed to plan strategically. This is especially important given the increasing emphasis placed on the role of the community on educational outcomes (particularly in disadvantaged areas). Some clusters remained in the same delivery mode that was adopted over Covid and during 2022/23 EA Community and Schools Team has provided support to a number of clusters to "review and reset" how they operate. EA will continue to support identified clusters in 2023/24 and in so doing will emphasis twokey principles of effective clustering.

**(i) Cluster Ethos**
Clusters should be encouraged to refocus on the core purpose of the cluster **(ii)** strengthening the relationships between the schools and the wider community. This often involves taking a step back from delivery, allocating time to plan this review and building in lead in time for the new approach to take effect. The best time for this process to occur is in the summer term prior to the new academic year however it is recognised that in the current environment schools face this is a significant challenge.

**(ii) Cluster Structure**
Many clusters have remained with the same structure and membership since the programme commenced in 2006. There is no "one size fits all" and during 2022/23 EA has supported a number of clusters to restructure in order to more effectively meet need. In some cases this has meant a large cluster has had to break into smaller clusters or has resulted in a change of lead and/or co-ordination role. Clusters should have the flexibility (within the remit of the Extended Schools policy) to restructure to meet changing circumstances and EA Community and Schools Team will support a number of identified clusters to review their structure in 2023/24.

- A**lignment with Other School Partnership Groups**
Schools have a number of options to work in partnership with other schools. Examples include Shared Education Partnerships, Pathways into Partnerships and Area Learning Communities. Although always grateful for the range of support being offered school principals have indicated that the workload associated with managing an increasing range of intervention programmes increases the burden on schools and risks reducing the overall impact on pupils. Schools should be encouraged to work across partnerships (where feasible) through a strategic area based approach. However, to do this EA Service teams should review cluster/partnerships and identify opportunities for alignment (and support schools to realise the benefits).

- **Further Parental Participation**
Feedback from clusters confirms that not all approaches to parental engagement are successful. Some clusters have noted that the engagement of parents post covid has been particularly challenging. The EA should support these clusters with outreach strategies including methods of communicating and engaging with parents as well as sharing examples of practice in 2023/24.

- **Good Practice**
There is no one size fits all for clustering. One of the main strengths of a cluster is to have the flexibility to respond to local needs. Extended Schools Clusters can benefit from good practice examples of cluster working. These need not necessarily come from within the Extended Schools Programme. Effective partnership working in other areas including Shared Education, Pathways into Partnership and Area Learning Communities should also be referenced.

- **Support for Irish Medium Clusters**
EA should review support for Irish Medium Clusters. While the EA Community and Schools Team can support the development and management of IM Clusters, more specific Irish Medium support would provide additional benefits. The EA Community and Schools Team will work with colleagues in the EA Shared Education and Sectoral Support Team to identify appropriate support.

# 7 Conclusion

The 2022/23 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 2022/23 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 2022/23 a number of challenges were noted and these will continue to impact on the Extended Schools programme in 2023/24 and beyond. These include:

## Budget
There are a combination of factors which place 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, the 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 changing.

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

## Funding Uncertainty
The hardship challenges facing many families have become more acute during 2022/23. Previously schools focused much of their ES support aligned to their FSME cohort however more schools are reporting the need to support working families. The flexibility of the Extended Schools Programme allows schools some room to adjust support however the prioritisation of support within a limited budget capacity has become more challenging. As well as these costs of living pressures the longer term impact of covid continues to present barriers to learning. Anecdotal feedback from schools (which is also reflected in action plans and annual reports) indicates that these challenges include – language and communication support for early years, health wellbeing anad resilience, engagement of parents and attendance of pupils.

## Workload
Feedback from principals in cluster meetings indicate that the workload involved in managing a number of intervention programmes can be significant. Extended Schools (and clusters) can allocate proportionate funding for co-ordination costs however recruitment of staff to carry out these roles has become increasingly challenging. Action Short of Strike is likely to be a factor however a number of clusters have also reported that there is a general recruitment shortage in the education sector.

# 8 Recommendations

**Extended Schools Clusters:**
EA should focus on development support for Extended Schools Clusters. This includes the development areas identified in pages 22-23 of this report summarised as:

- Reviewing identified clusters to help ensure that a shared ethos and fit for purpose structure provides maximum impact for pupils and their families.

- Providing support on parental engagement methods

- Signposting Irish Medium Clusters to additional support including available support provided by the EA Shared Education and Sectoral Support Team

- Exploring opportunities to align Extended Schools Clusters with other partnership/cluster arrangements.

**Strategic alignment of Extended Schools Programme:**
As referenced elsewhere in this report schools have reported the increasing challenges of implementing a range of programmes including those which target education disadvantage. These programmes often come with specific criteria, delivery parameters and separate administrative and reporting processes. Consideration should be given to reviewing these programmes with a view to aligning them, where possible, to maximise the impact on pupils and reduce the burden on schools.

At an operational level EA should map the various school cluster and partnership arrangements currently in place to identify opportunities to join up and improve service delivery to young people and their families. It is recognised that this is not always possible however the learning from this exercise will help to inform the design and structure of future programmes