Families and Schools Together (FAST)

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is a parental engagement programme that aims to improve attainment, and social and emotional outcomes by enhancing links between families, school and the community. Parents and their children attend weekly group sessions, run by trained local partners, that encourage good home routines around homework, mealtimes and bedtimes.

EEF Summary

There is good evidence that parental engagement is important for learning outcomes, but less evidence on effective strategies for engagement. FAST is widely used in English schools and evaluations from the US have found evidence of promise, particularly for social and emotional outcomes. The EEF tested FAST to see whether it could be effective at improving outcomes for pupils in England.

The evaluation found no evidence of an impact on attainment outcomes, either for the pupils who actually attended the sessions or for the year group as a whole. One explanation of these findings comes from the wider evidence base, which shows that parental engagement programmes without a clear academic focus have sometimes struggled to improve pupil attainment.

Positive impacts on two out of three social and emotional outcomes were detected for the whole year group immediately after the intervention, although a year after the sessions, these effects had waned.

The project was very successful at engaging parents, with 83% of parents who began the programme attending six or more of the eight sessions. This rate of attendance is notable given that previous research on parental engagement, including recent EEF trials, has highlighted the difficulty of getting parents to attend sessions.
Research Results

Outcome/Group | Impact - the size of the difference between Families and Schools Together (FAST) pupils and other pupils | Security - how confident are we in this result?
--- | --- | ---
KS1 Reading & Arithmetic | 0 Months' Progress | N/A
KS1 Reading & Arithmetic (everFSM) | 0 Months' Progress | N/A

Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

- There were 115 schools in this trial, located across the country
- 84 of the 115 were rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted
- 38% of pupils in intervention schools were ever eligible for free school meals (everFSM)

Could I implement this in my school?

- The programme is delivered by Save the Children UK.
- A grant is provided to cover the costs of implementation

Delivered by Volunteers | Participant group Parents | Intervention length 2 Years

How much will it cost?

The average cost to schools in this evaluation was £1,993 per school. This works out at a cost of £48 per pupil per year averaged over three years, or £133 per target pupil per year averaged over three year. Schools estimated that, on average, 48 additional staff hours were required for running FAST, in addition to the eight 2.5-hour sessions run by staff.

Cost per pupil £48 | No. of Teachers/TAs Variable | Training time per staff member 2 Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Key Stage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>4221</td>
<td>Key Stage 1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>End date</th>
<th>Type of trial</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
<td>Effectiveness Trial</td>
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Evaluation Conclusions

1. There was no evidence that FAST had an impact on Key Stage 1 outcomes for the whole year group.

2. There was also no evidence that FAST had an impact on Key Stage 1 outcomes for the FAST ‘target’ pupils (the children whose families signed up to the eight-week programme).

3. Year 1 pupils in the FAST schools had a higher average prosocial score and a lower average total difficulties score than pupils in control schools in the period immediately after the eight-week programme. By the end of Year 2, these effects had waned.

4. Schools generally engaged positively with the FAST programme and felt well prepared to deliver FAST. However, they found that recruiting local partners was a challenge, particularly community partners, due to the time commitments required. Recruitment of families was most successful where schools engaged more active parents as advocates to help encourage others to join. Schools and partners wanted better information on programme requirements and wanted the training (which was generally highly regarded) to include more time for practice sessions.

5. The self-reported capacity for schools and parents to engage was enhanced both in the immediate and longer-term for the FAST parents. However, the success of maintaining the parent group (through FASTworks) or benefiting parents and children in the wider year group was more limited.