



FAMILIES CONNECT

EVALUATION OF AUTUMN DELIVERY 2016

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Evaluation of Autumn delivery, 2016

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Executive summary

Executive Summary

The need

In the UK, children from lower income families are 50% less likely to do as well at school as their wealthier classmates. For these families, creating a good learning environment at home – and crucially, increasing parents' skills and confidence to support their child's learning – can reduce the impact of poverty on their child's future. The better the home learning environment, the better the child's learning can be. To support parents and help give children the best chance of achieving their full potential, Save the Children has created Families Connect. Delivered through eight weekly sessions within the school, the programme recognises the role parents play in the education of their children and the value of creating a home environment that is conducive to learning. Designed around the needs of children aged four to six, the programme uses play as the vehicle for learning and interaction and focuses on three key areas:

1. Social and emotional development
2. Literacy and language development
3. Numeracy and mathematics

The evaluation

The Autumn term 2016 evaluation was designed to build on existing evidence from the Summer term 2016 delivery on the potential impact of the programme and generate further learning about programme content and delivery to inform future implementation.

Over the course of the 2016 Autumn term, Families Connect was delivered in 16 schools, to 139 families, across the UK. The report includes data on 136 participating families (children and their parent(s)) as well as data from 110 children allocated as controls within 6 of the schools. The evaluation employed a mixed method design. It consisted of qualitative pre and post focus groups with parents and school facilitators in participating schools and three quantitative tools: a parent questionnaire, teacher questionnaire and one-to-one teacher-child assessment (BPVS3), which were administered before and after the programme and at a three-month follow-up.

Standardised measures were used to assess children's outcomes in receptive vocabulary and behaviour.

- The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS3), a one-to-one teacher-conducted assessment, was used to measure the language development of the child – specifically the

child's receptive vocabulary.

- The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) teacher and parent report was used to measure children's behaviour – at pre-, post- and three-month follow-up.

Key findings

Most parents reported strong beliefs and attitudes about their role in their child's learning prior to taking part in the programme. Four main motivators to participating in the programme were identified: supporting the child's development and learning; increasing one on one time with their children; building parenting skills and meeting new people and building social networks. The high retention rate of the programme (68%) demonstrates its success in engaging and sustaining the interest of the participating families.

Most of the parents participating in the qualitative part of the evaluation stated that they and their child enjoyed attending the programme.

"It's a fantastic programme, full of educational fun and interesting tips and advice on helping your child learn."

Findings from the parent questionnaire reflected the enjoyment and positive impact of the programme:

Post Programme:

- 97% (93) of parents said they really enjoyed the programme
- 94.7% (91) of parents said their child really enjoyed the programme
- 90.6% (87) of parents perceived the influence of Families Connect on what they and their child do together at home
- 75% (72) of parents perceived an influence of the programme on other members of the family at home
- 97% (93) said that they would recommend Families Connect to others
- 67.7% (59) said that they had recommended Families Connect to others already

At three-month follow-up:

- 91.1% (41) perceived an impact of Families Connect on what they do with their child in the home

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- 75.5% (34) perceived an influence of the programme on other members of the family at home

Parents felt that the programme had increased the amount of time that they spent 'one on one' with the participating children, noting the importance of this time.

"Bonding and learning all rolled into one, one on one interaction with child while also having fun."

Respondents felt there had been positive outcomes for the parents themselves, they reported that they listened to their children more, were calmer and felt more confident to help their children with their learning at home.

"It has made me be more reflective as a parent – thinking about praising, being positive, listening to children 'properly' to enhance relationships with child."

Teacher: *"Positive impact on parents confidence and involvement"*.

Statistically significant improvements¹ were evident in parents' perceptions of self-efficacy and their belief in their ability to support their children's learning, between pre and post programme and between pre and three-month follow-up.

Parents also felt they had improved their understanding of the child and their child's learning, which in turn saw improvements in how they communicate with their children and how they interact with their child's learning and development.

Teacher: *"Parent now has an increased awareness of how supporting your child at home can improve their achievement in school. Now works much more at home with reading."*

The majority of parents reported that Families Connect had a positive impact on the home learning environment, providing new insights into ways of learning at home.

"I found the activities useful as it helped me and my child have motivation for those things at home, she really enjoyed it."

Many parents and teachers felt they had identified improvements in the child's behaviour and softer skills. Parents noted that children had increased confidence, improved listening skills and had become better at expressing their emotions.

"They are getting more confident and much better with stories and numbers."

Significant improvements in parents' perception of child behaviour were found at post programme and at three-month follow-up for measures of pro-social behaviour.

Teachers stated that some of the children were more confident in class and getting on better with their peers and others were less attention seeking and settled in the classroom following the programme.

Teacher: *"Child less anxious and more confident in class, more social in class, less attention seeking."*

Statistically significant improvements were also identified across a number of key outcomes post programme, which faded over time and were not found to be significant at three month follow-up; these included:

- teacher-reported total difficulties (e.g. conduct problems, emotional etc);
- teacher-reported measures of pro-social behaviours
- teacher-reported peer relationship problems

Teachers also provided assessments of children's attitudes towards school and learning such as general progress, motivation, concentration and enjoyment. A significant difference was evident in these softer skills between pre- and post-programme assessment and sustained over time at three-month follow-up. Significant positive impact at three month follow-up was also identified for:

- teacher-reported hyperactivity/inattention (at 3 month follow-up only)
- parent-reported pro-social behaviour

However, it should be noted that a significant difference was also found in the 3-month follow up for the control group in relation to children's attitudes towards school and learning, with no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups at the long term follow up.

Teachers perceived an influence on child's academic ability between pre- and post-programme:

- 19.2% (22) of pupils improved in overall academic ability
- 26.3% (30) of pupils improved in reading ability
- 24.5% (28) of pupils improved in maths ability

The BPVS3 assessment was used to ascertain children's receptive vocabulary. A statistically significant difference was evident between pre programme and post programme, as well as pre programme and three-month follow-up receptive vocabulary mean standardised scores for the participating group. However, it should be noted that there was not a significant difference between intervention and control group means at three months. Children from the participating group made significant improvements in their receptive vocabulary, with the mean score moving

¹ Statistically significant improvements were measured through paired t-tests which assess the difference in means between two related (pre and post test scores). Statistical significant difference suggests that there is only a very small probability that this result happens by chance.

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approximately three (post) and one (3 months) points closer to the expected age-appropriate standard score of 100. Out of the 68 children who were assessed at pre-programme and at three-month follow-up, 57.3% of their standardised scores improved, 4.4% remained the same and 38.2% decreased.

In addition to child and parent outcomes, the evaluation also sought to test the impact of the programme on parent-school relationships and interaction. There were significant differences identified between pre and post programme, as well as between pre and three-month follow-up. The qualitative data reflects the initial 8 week effects and indicates that the programme had provided a platform for the families to meet new friends and build social networks. They report they now are much more engaged with other families within the school, as well as more engaged in the school community.

“No longer just dropping kids and going home, now inviting people round for a coffee and we have facebook group conversations.”

“[...] It makes me feel better when I come out as I know I am not the only one; it showed me that I wasn't alone.”

6. Reviewing and streamlining our monitoring and evaluation tools, a process which includes both currently used tools (e.g. BPVS3) and scales, procedures and tools under consideration (e.g. numeracy measures, further qualitative investigation).
7. Strengthening our approach to sampling in schools – especially with regard to selecting children in control groups.

Conclusions and next steps

Results show that the Autumn 2016 delivery of Families Connect continued to demonstrate positive outcomes for participating children and parents. The results of the quantitative analysis support the programme model and overall the evaluation provide evidence of the potential for programme effectiveness and sustainable impact for families. The evaluation has also generated rich learning, outlined in a series of limitations and recommendations in the main report that have and will continue to inform the programme development for ongoing implementation.

The main recommendations to have come out of the evaluation of the Autumn 2016 term are the following:

1. Focusing on programme continuation and sustainability to understand the potential impact of the programme beyond the three month follow-up stage.
2. Reviewing the school information sheets to ensure that they provide schools with the information they need on the programme.
3. Focusing on the aspect of parent role construction and the recruitment of less engaged parents.
4. Encouraging the participation of fathers.
5. Addressing end of programme drop-out which impacts on the strength of the analysis of collected data.

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Background and description

Background and description

Theory and underpinning evidence

Save the Children is committed to ensuring that every child reaches their full potential. There is increasing evidence around the importance of 'school readiness' and children from lower income homes tending to be further behind their better off peers when they start school.

Evidence tells us the engagement of parents in their child's learning contributes to a child's readiness to learn and has a positive impact on children's educational outcomes.² Children spend only 14% of their time in school, highlighting the role that parents have in supporting their children's learning. Parenting practices such as reading to children, using complex language, responsiveness, and warmth in interactions are all associated with better developmental outcomes. Stimulating activities may enhance development by helping children with specific skills (for example, linking letters to sounds) but also, and perhaps most importantly, by developing the child's ability and motivation concerned with learning generally.

Parents' 'engagement' in their child's learning is seen to help in the following ways:

- Learning from the actual activity
- Contact time between parent and child
- Validation that 'learning' is important through the act of prioritising time for it (Sylva et al., 2012)

Typical activities that are deemed to define a 'positive home learning environment' include:

- Reading together
- Painting and drawing
- Going to the library
- Being taught numbers
- Being taught songs, poems and rhymes
- Being taught letters
- Playing with numbers (Sylva et al., 2004)

- Home computing
- Parent-child activities outside the home
- Parent-child one-to-one interactions at home
- Expressive play (Sylva et al., 2008)

Furthermore, studies have found that the activities parents do with their children at home have a greater impact on their child's attainment at school than socio-economic status or parents' education:

"For all children, the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. What parents do is more important than who parents are." (Sylva et al., 2004)

Similarly Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) found that in the primary age range, the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools and that the scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups.

There is also a general consensus that parental involvement in children's learning has clearer educational benefits than involvement in other aspects of school life (such as volunteering in a classroom, fundraising or becoming a parent governor). This is not to say involvement in the school is not valuable, but that engagement in learning at home has a higher impact (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2006).

Consequently, as part of wider attempts to close the social class achievement gap or 'poverty gradient' in education in the UK, schools are encouraged to identify interventions that are effective in supporting parental engagement, particularly for those parents who are not significantly involved in their children's education. Best practice guidelines have been produced to support schools to increase parental engagement in their schools and guidance and toolkits written on how to write a 'parent engagement' strategy produced alongside it (Grayson, 2013 and Education Endowment Foundation, 2016). This demonstrates the value placed on parental engagement and the role it can play to contribute to a child's achievement in school. However, schools often report that they know what they must do but they do not know how to go about it.

Initial scoping for the Families Connect programme supported this existing research. Parents from lower income families identified that they would like to support their children with their learning, but did not know how to do so effectively, or had the confidence or assurance that what

² Kiernan and Mensah (2011) uncovered 18 parenting practices that are related to early academic achievement. These include support with reading, home learning activities, library visits, attending parents' evenings, warm parent-child interactions and maintaining regular schedules. According to this research, higher-quality parenting appears to improve children's early achievement at every level of family resource and household income (p. 323).

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Background and description

they were doing was helpful. Scoping with head teachers in schools with high proportions of families eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) also identified that whilst many parents wanted the best for their children, they were not always well equipped to provide support at home and many were uncomfortable coming into school to ask for help. The research also ascertained that families would most value support for their child's social and emotional development, literacy and numeracy.

Programme overview

Families Connect is a newly developed programme designed by Save the Children UK to support parents and carers to enhance their child's learning at home and in school. The programme recognises the role parents play in the education of children and the value of creating a stimulating home environment conducive to learning.

The programme aims to provide children aged four to six from lower income families with a greater chance of achieving their potential attainment. Using play as the vehicle for learning and interaction over eight weekly sessions, Families Connect provides a series of activities, techniques and games that parents and carers can practice with their children in order to consider how they can introduce these into their own home environments.

Families Connect is unique in that it focuses on three key areas:

1. Social and emotional development
2. Literacy and language development
3. Numeracy and mathematics

The programme's design is based on evidence that activities that support social and emotional learning, book sharing, storytelling and counting and number games are significantly associated with better than expected achievement at age five, taking social and demographic factors into account. To ensure the maximum impact on children's education, each of the modules has been written by an expert in their field. Table 1 below sets out the different workshop modules and themes, and the consultants who developed the session content.

Table 1: Workshop structure and development

Module	Workshop Theme	Consultant
Social and emotional development	Week 1: Focus on Feelings	Julie Casey, an educational psychologist who co-developed the SEAL Programme (Social Emotional Aspects of Learning)
	Week 2: The Importance of Praise	
	Week 3: The Importance of Listening	
Literacy and language development	Week 4: Book Talk	National Literacy Trust, a national charity dedicated to raising literacy levels in the UK, with a focus on families, young people and children
	Week 5: Beyond the Page	
Numeracy and mathematics	Week 6: The Importance of Counting	Edge Hill University, pioneers of the school intervention programme Every Child Counts to help boost attainment in mathematics
	Week 7: Number Talk	
	Week 8: Celebration and Evaluation	

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Background and description

The workshop sessions focus on:

- Children's emotional regulation, with children engaging in activities where they recognise and understand their feelings and communicate these to their parents.
- Developing parental practices such as positive reinforcement and good praise and listening skills.
- Good communication, developing parents' interest and confidence in literacy and reading.
- Developing parent's empathy, understanding, confidence and communication around children's learning of numeracy and maths and overcoming some of the common misconceptions around this.

Programme aims

Families Connect aims to:

- Stimulate the Home Learning Environment; including increasing the confidence and skills of parents and carers and enhancing the activities they do together with their children and their knowledge of how they support learning.
- Model how to approach, engage and work with families (parental engagement).
- Create opportunities for schools and parents to build relationships.



Expected impact and programme outcomes

The intended long-term effects of Families Connect are that children will have a greater chance of achieving their potential and doing better at school as their parents will do more in the home to support their education. We aim to do this by developing the skills and confidence of the parents and carers who take part in Families Connect, and providing them with the resources needed to actively engage their children in learning in the home.

Intended outcomes for children include:

- Improvements in child's softer skills in regards to education and motivation to learn.
- Improvements in child's social and emotional skills.
- Improvements in child's communication skills.
- Improvements in child's interest in and understanding of literacy and numeracy.

Intended outcomes for parents include:

- Improvements in parent/child communication.
- Increase in understanding and empathy for their child's learning.
- Increase in parental motivation to support their child's learning.
- Increase in parent's confidence in supporting their child's learning.
- Increase in communication between parents and school

Intended outcomes for schools include:

- Increase in parental engagement in the school community (including social capital).
- Strengthening of relationships between the school and parents.
- Positive changes within the school environment.

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Delivery overview

Delivery overview

Families Connect works with families in targeted schools. Identification is based on the percentage of children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) or through area-based knowledge of schools with greater need. In Scotland, schools are identified through the Social Index of Multiple Deprivation and local knowledge of Save the Children Programme staff, who work closely with Local Authorities to target schools with the greatest need.

Families Connect is designed for parents and carers with at least one child who is aged between four to six years old. Approximately 10 families attend a series of two-hour workshops delivered in school over eight weeks. The timings of the workshops are flexible to meet parents' and school needs. Parents attend some elements of the workshop by themselves and some with their children. The format for each week is the same, with different module content reflecting the different module themes and messages.

This Autumn 2016 test was delivered through our 'in house' model of delivery; with the programme being delivered by Save the Children UK (SCUK) Trainers and SCUK Quality Development Advisors (QDA's) and co-facilitated by school-based staff. All SCUK Trainers and QDA's had attended a two-day Families Connect delivery training prior to running the programme for the first time (either in March or July 2016), led by the central team; the Families Connect Manager and Families Connect Training Project Manager. They then cascaded delivery information through a one-to-one briefing with the school co-facilitator, which typically lasted one day. This training and subsequent briefings were accompanied by a Families Connect delivery manual, which contained session plans and resource examples. The delivery manual and resources used in Autumn term delivery had received significant re-design work and were of a much higher standard and quality to those used in summer delivery. The manual included guidance documents on various aspects of the programme's delivery which were not used in summer delivery.

Within schools, Families Connect is provided as a universal offer for parents and carers. Peer modelling and learning is an important part of the programme model and therefore it is encouraged that schools recruit a range of different families within a school. However, instances of targeting participants of other school-based programmes or interventions were encountered.

Each Trainer or QDA led the delivery of each weekly session, preparing resources in advance and discussing with the co-facilitator which elements each would lead on. At the

end of each session, the Trainer and co-facilitator would reflect back on the session and discuss what went well, what did not, potential areas for reflection and feedback as well as check safeguarding concerns and any practicalities for the following week. These discussions were recorded on a site weekly monitoring spreadsheet, along with attendance information. The Trainer would also record reflections and conversations that were held in the parent reflectiontime. These were coded to individual families to match up to other quantitative data being gathered.

SCUK Trainers and QDA's were supported by the Families Connect central team on a weekly basis through a weekly delivery catch up call. The calls allowed Trainers and QDA's to learn from other delivery and facilitated peer-to-peer support. They also provided a chance to share learning and to feed back directly to the central team, to allow challenges and difficulties to be addressed and to inform the ongoing development of the programme. Support was also offered on an on-demand basis by the Families Connect central team.

One site visit was carried out by the central team at each site between weeks two to four of delivery, providing on-site support and guidance to both the SCUK Trainer and school co-facilitator. The quality and fidelity of programme delivery was also observed with reflections and suggestions made to the site in response.

At the end of programme delivery, an evaluation meeting was held between the SCUK Trainer, regional Programmes Manager, school lead and school co-facilitator to reflect back on the positives and negatives of programme delivery and formulate recommendations for improvement.



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Rationale: Scope and purpose of the evaluation

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The Autumn term 2016 evaluation was designed to build on existing evidence from the Summer term 2016 delivery on the potential impact of the programme and generate further learning about programme content and delivery to inform future implementation.

The expected outcomes for Families Connect at the parental level are improvements in parental engagement in education and learning and improvements in the home learning environment of their children. This will be achieved through an increase in the frequency and quality of the support parents actively provide for their child's social and emotional learning, and learning around literacy and numeracy. This will be done through an increased sense of parental self-efficacy and knowledge and skills in how to support their children's learning. Another expected outcome of the project will be the strengthening of relationships between parents and schools. Expected child outcomes are in children's social and emotional behaviour, communication and softer skills. Improvements in children's educational attainment and therefore life chances are the expected longer-term impacts of Families Connect.

Discussions with the programme designers highlighted the key outcomes of the different domains of the workshops. The activities of the workshops and the specifically sought parent and child outcomes from these were used to develop the log frame for the project.

For the current evaluation the outcomes of focus are:

1. Improvements in the home learning environment

- Increase in parental engagement of activities that are likely to have a positive effect on child cognitive development.

2. Development of appropriate parental skills Increases in parental confidence

- Increases in parental motivation
- Improvements in parent-child communication
- Increases in understanding and empathy for child learning

3. Development of children's softer skills

- Increases in child academic self-esteem
- Increases in child motivation to learn

4. Development of children's communication skills

- Increases in expressive and receptive vocabulary

5. Improvements in children's social and emotional behaviour

- Improvements in children interest and understanding of literacy and numeracy

6. Improved relationship between parent and school

- Increases in parental engagement
- Increase in parent and school communication

Initial development phase, 2014-2016

The 2016 Autumn test followed three previous tests in 2014, 2015 and Summer term in 2016. The initial pilot tested the feasibility of a smaller scale version of the project, based over four weeks; looking at whether Families Connect was something schools were interested in taking up and if parents were interested in attending and coming back to take part each week. This largely qualitative pilot was used to further develop and inform the modules and programme. Initial findings showed that parents, children and school staff appreciated the project and initiated positive changes within the school environment. A key recommendation identified from the first phase of tests was the need for more qualitative feedback from the participating children about their experiences to gauge the impact of the programme. This was addressed in subsequent test phases.

The second phase of testing was designed to find out whether the programme as ten weekly two-hour workshops was effective at improving the home learning environments of the families involved. The workshops were scheduled to follow the same format to ensure consistency in approach. As part of the evaluation process in 2015, a logical framework was drawn up that identified the overall goal of the project as improvements to the home learning environment to support future educational achievement with five core short-term outcomes:

1. Increased level of support parents actively provide for their child's social and emotional learning
2. Increased level of support parents actively provide for their child's learning around literacy
3. Increased level of support parents actively provide for their child's learning around numeracy
4. Increase in child's softer skills such as confidence, self-esteem, and motivation to learn

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Rationale: Scope and purpose of the evaluation

Term	Year	Duration of Delivery	Facilitators	Delivery
Programme Pilot: Autumn	2014	4 weeks	In House Family and Education Officers and Families Connect Project Manager	1 x Social and Emotional Learning 1 x Literacy 1 x Numeracy 1 x Evaluation and Celebration
Summer	2015	10 weeks	In House Trainers (& co-facilitation)	3 x Social and Emotional 3 x Literacy 3 x Numeracy 1 x evaluation and celebration
Summer; Autumn	2016	8 weeks	In house trainers and Quality Development Advisors (QDA's) with co-facilitation from school staff or community based professional.	3 x Social and Emotional 2 x Literacy 2 x Numeracy 1 x evaluation and celebration
Spring (First pilot of CP delivery)	2017	8 weeks	Community Practitioners (trained by SC Training Project Manager and Families Connect Manager, with QDA's)	3 x Social and Emotional 2 x Literacy 2 x Numeracy 1 x evaluation and celebration
Summer	2017	8 Weeks	Community practitioners (trained by SC Trainers with support from Training Development Manager and Early Learning Services Portfolio Manager)	3 x Social and Emotional 2 x Literacy 2 x Numeracy 1 x evaluation and celebration

5. Strengthening of relationship between parents and schools such as confidence to raise concerns, involvement in the school community

Quantitative and qualitative data was captured during the pilot. Pre and post questionnaires with parents and qualitative data demonstrated a positive impact on parents in terms of their confidence, skills and in the number of activities being carried out in the home. Pre and post teacher reports also captured the programme's perceived impact on children.

The table above provides a summary of the evolution of Families Connect delivery, from Autumn 2014 to Autumn 2016. Further information on facilitators and delivery models can be found in Annex H to this report.



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Rationale: Scope and purpose of the evaluation

Aim of the 2016 evaluation (Summer and Autumn terms)

This stage of evaluation was designed to develop a more robust evidence base for Families Connect to support its wider roll out across the UK. The evaluation was designed to assess whether the current model of Families Connect (in house delivery model) was fit for purpose, and test proof of concept by measuring the impact of the programme on parents and children when delivered through in house trainers and co-facilitated by school staff.

The current evaluation methodology builds on existing evidence through a longer-term more robust quantitative assessment complemented by in-depth qualitative interviews. It considers in more detail the intermediate and longer-term outcomes for the parent and child related to this and is enriched by the qualitative data that provides greater detail around the key themes of the programme. In addition, it provides rich parental feedback regarding the programme content and delivery, as well as allowing a situational analysis of the families taking part in the programme.

The evaluation has been conducted internally and with the intention of commissioning an external evaluation at a later stage of delivery.

These findings from Autumn term delivery evaluation have contributed to the overall analysis of results for Summer and Autumn 2016 deliveries. Discussion of combined results is included in the discussion section of this report and is used to inform the long-term model of evaluation used to assess and demonstrate impact of the programme.

A glossary to the terminology used in the report can be found in Annex I to this report (p. 58).



Methodology: Quantitative

The primary objective of the quantitative element of the evaluation was to assess changes in child and parent outcomes of those attending the programme over time.

Three quantitative tools were used during this test:

1. Parent questionnaire
2. Teacher questionnaire
3. One-to-one teacher-child assessment (BPVS3)

Parents and teachers completed the questionnaire and teachers the assessment, at pre-, post-, and three-month follow-up of the programme. In addition, a secondary objective was to assess whether a similar group of children allocated to a control group within each of the schools had a similar trajectory of outcomes as measured by the teacher questionnaire and assessment across the three time periods (parent questionnaires were conducted with participants of the programme only). Teachers were asked to identify the control children within the same class setting as intervention children, based on similarity of family demographic and child learning characteristics to the participating children. Control children were not randomly allocated and therefore we cannot be sure that there was no bias in the selection process made by teachers. In addition, the teachers within the classroom were often co-facilitating the programme and we have no information pertaining to whether they have used the resources outside of FC, or enough evidence to indicate whether the programme effects spill over to the wider class.

Participants

Participants of the programme included 139 children and their parent(s) from 16 schools across the UK. Data collected at baseline for this report included 136 children of the total 139. The report also includes data from 110 children allocated as controls within 14 of the schools. Although all 16 schools were asked to complete data for control children, no baseline data was submitted within two of the schools.

With regard to the demographics of the participating children who were assessed at baseline:

- Participating children had a mean age of 4.8 years ($SD=0.72$) with an age range of three to seven years of age.
- 43.66% (62) of them were male and 45.07% (64) female.

- In terms of ethnicity, 56.34% (80) were white British.
- 14.08% (20) did not speak English as their first language.
- 11.97% (17) were reported to have special educational needs.
- 3.52% (5) were reported as having a disability.

The control children who were assessed at baseline:

- had a mean age of 4.8 years ($SD=0.70$).
- The gender ratio was split 43.65% (55) male and 38.89% (49).
- In terms of ethnicity, 52.39% (66) were white British.
- 12.70% (16) did not speak English as their first language.
- 3.97% (5) were reported to have special educational needs.
- 1.59% (2) reported to have a disability.

Lastly, with regard to the parents that took part in the Autumn 2016 term:

- The mean age of adults participating as assessed at baseline was 34.46 years ($SD=7.1$), with an age range of 22 to 53 years.
- The majority attending were female 91.8% (113) and biological parents 91.8% (113).
- Over half (61.8%) were married or co-habiting with a partner.
- The majority of parents were not in full-time employment, with 43% looking after the family home, 9.8% unemployed and seeking employment and 19.5% in part-time employment.
- The level of education attainment for parents was average, with the overwhelming majority of respondents reporting a number of qualifications, and less than 10% reporting no qualifications at all. This was largely the case with parent partner qualifications as well.
- In terms of ethnicity, the majority of parents participating were white British 58.5% (72).
- 8.9% (11) of participating parents reported a disability.

Further demographic information on participating children and parents, and control children is available in Annex A to this report.

Measures

The questionnaire administered to parents pre programme included demographic questions on age, gender, ethnicity, disability and special educational needs of the participating

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child, and age, gender, ethnicity, disability, educational qualifications and employment status of participating parent as well as questions on partner educational qualifications, family structure and family income.

The parent questionnaire was administered across three time points: pre programme, post programme delivery and at three-month follow-up. It included a series of different measures to assess parents' perceptions of child behaviour, parental attitudes to involvement in their child's education, the quality of the home learning environment and an assessment of their self-esteem. The questionnaire also included questions on enjoyment of the programme and perceived influence on family interaction. The questionnaire included the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ: Goodman, 1997) to assess changes in parents' perceptions of child behaviour. The measure includes subscales, which assess emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and pro-social behaviour. The questionnaire assessed parental attitudes to involvement in their child's education through a measure of parental role construction and of parental self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). Parent role construction assesses parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and the types of behaviours that follow. It is shown to be an important influencer on parents' decisions about involvement. Positive parent self-efficacy or belief in one's abilities to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes is associated with parents making positive decisions about their engagement in their child's education. The questionnaire assessed the quality of the home learning environment of the child through the Home Learning Environment Index for KS1 used within the Effective Pre-School and Primary Education 7-11 Project (the EPPE study) (see Sylva et al, 2008). The questionnaire also included a measure of parents' individual self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

The questionnaire administered to teachers pre programme included demographic questions. This questionnaire included questions on age, gender, ethnicity, disability and special educational needs of the participating child.

The teacher questionnaire was administered across three time points, pre programme, post programme delivery and at three-month follow-up. It included a series of different measures to assess child behaviour, child's softer skills at school, and level of parental engagement in education. The questionnaire also included questions on teachers' perceived overall academic ability of the pupil, reading and math ability. The questionnaire included a bespoke developed scale of children's softer skills (see appendix E) and the

teacher version of the SDQ (Goodman, 1997) to assess changes in perceptions of child behaviour at school. This measure also includes the subscales: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and pro-social behaviour. The teacher assessment of parental involvement was taken from the Hoover-Dempsey studies of parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992).

The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS3), a one-to-one teacher-conducted assessment, was used to measure the language development of the child – specifically the child's receptive vocabulary – at pre, post, and three-month follow-up.

Procedure

Families that took part in the programme were invited to participate if they had a child between four and six years of age, and were interested in taking part in a programme to support their children's learning. No inclusion criteria were set for families taking part, however schools were invited to take part based on the high proportion (20% or more) of children eligible for free school meals (FSM).³ Many of the parents attended a coffee morning session in advance of the programme. These recruitment events provided information for parents and an opportunity to collect pre data for those who agreed to participate (for those unable to attend coffee morning sessions, pre data was collected at the start of the first session). Teachers also completed a questionnaire and BPVS3 assessment on children participating in advance of attending the programme or within the same week of the first session.

Post programme parent questionnaires were filled in at week eight of the programme. Schools were instructed to complete post programme teacher questionnaires and the BPVS3 assessment within a few weeks of programme completion. The three-month follow-up was completed through the co-facilitator contacting parents within schools and requesting questionnaire and BPVS3 completion from teachers.

³ In some cases schools under 20% FSM were invited to take part if regional programmes teams provided a strong rationale for working with the school and the benefits of their involvement.

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Table 2: Measures for participants and controls

	Participant group			Control groups		
	Pre	Post	3mth	Pre	Post	3mth
Parent questionnaire	x	x	x	-	-	-
Demographics	x	-	-	-	-	-
Enjoyment/influence /impact	-	x	x	-	-	-
SDQ parent report	x	x	x	-	-	-
Role construction	x	x	x	-	-	-
Self-efficacy	x	x	x	-	-	-
HLE index	x	x	x	-	-	-
Self-esteem	x	x	x	-	-	-
Teacher questionnaire	x	x	x	x	x	x
Demographics	x	-	-	x	-	-
Academic ability	x	x	x	x	x	x
Children's softer skills	x	x	x	x	x	x
SDQ teacher report	x	x	x	x	x	x
Parental involvement	x	x	x	x	x	x
Teacher assessment						
BPVS3	x	x	x	x	x	x

Of the 122 participating families who completed parent questionnaires at baseline, 78.6% (96) completed post-programme parent questionnaires and 37.7% (46) completed parent questionnaires at three-month follow-up (this discrepancy is discussed in p.30). Teachers completed pre programme questionnaires for 136 children participating in the programme, 114 post programme questionnaires for participating children and 60 three-month follow-up questionnaires for participating children. Teachers from five schools completed pre programme questionnaires for 110 control children, 102 post programme questionnaires for control and 51 at three-month follow-up questionnaires for control.

14 schools accurately completed and submitted the data from the teacher assessment for participating child at pre-programme. Of the 112 children participating in the

programme accurately assessed at pre programme, 47.3% (53) were male and 51.7% (58) were female. Teachers completed assessments for 83 participating children at post programme (95.2% of those with pre-data) and 72 participating children at three-month follow-up (94.4% of those with pre data).

Of the 14 schools that submitted accurate data on the BPVS3 pre-programme, all 14 completed assessments for control children (12 schools submitted post programme and three-month follow-up and 8 schools submitted either post or three month follow-up assessments). Of these 110 children accurately assessed at pre programme, 41.8% (46) were male and 51.8% (57) were female. Teachers completed assessments for 70 control children at post programme (94.4% of those with pre data) and 69 control children at three-month follow-up (95.7% of those with pre data).

The extent of missing data highlighted above has an impact on the quality of analysis and the ability to generalise findings.

See Figure 1 for a flow chart showing progression of families through the study.

Analysis

The primary objective of the quantitative element of the evaluation was to assess the child and parent outcomes of those attending the programme over time. Significant differences in mean values for each of the child and parent outcomes were analysed at pre and post programme and at pre and three-month follow-up using paired t-tests.

The secondary objective was to assess and compare whether the children allocated to the control group had a similar trajectory of outcomes as the participating children as measured by the teacher questionnaire and teacher assessment of receptive vocabulary over time. Significant differences in mean values for each of the child and parent outcomes were analysed at pre and post programme and pre and three-month follow-up using paired t-tests.

Additionally, significant differences between the participant and control groups were analysed for at baseline (and at post and three-month follow-up where appropriate) and have been included in the findings.

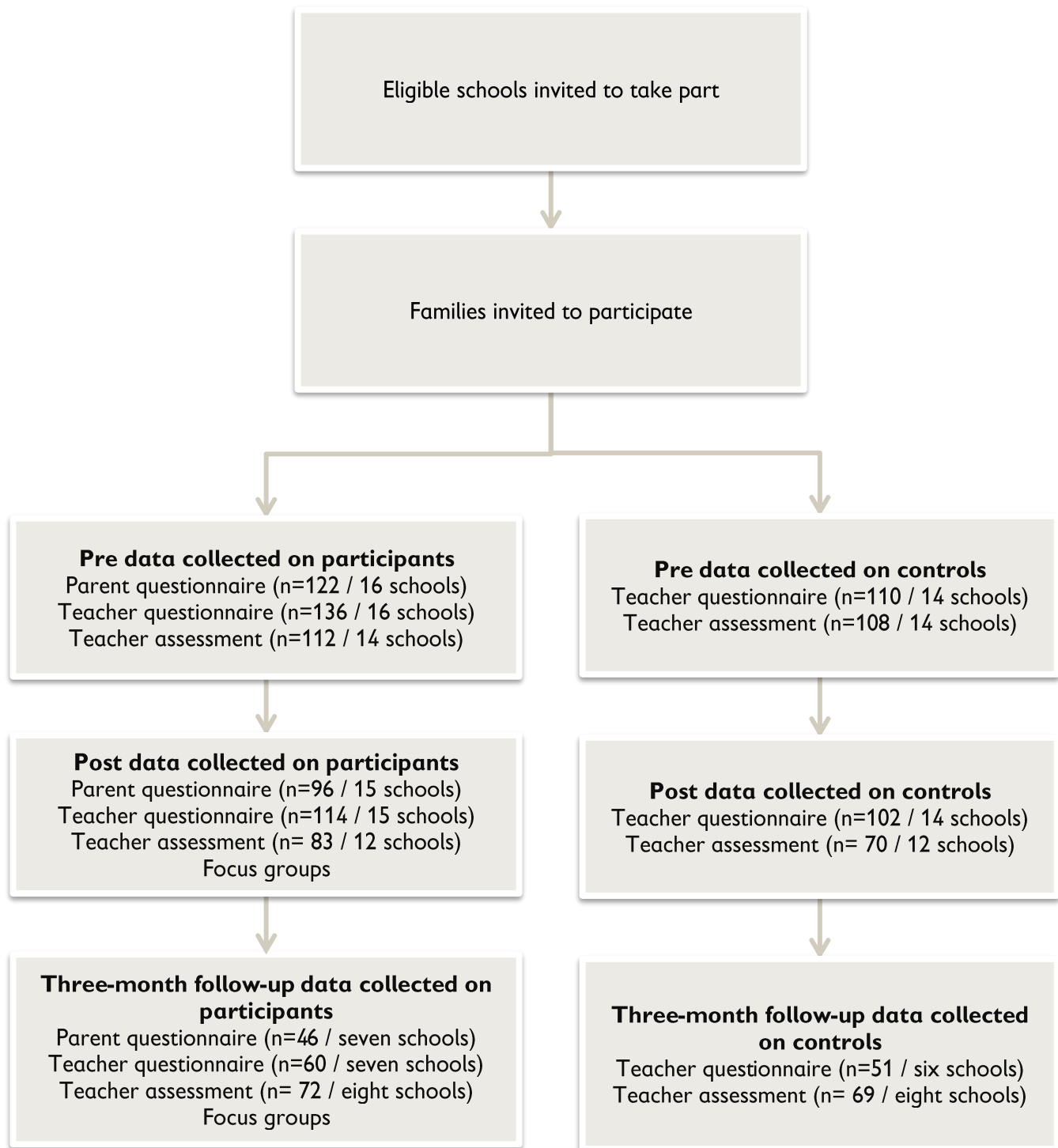
Programme delivery

From those participants who signed up to the programme and attended at least one session (n=139), 68% attended a minimum of six sessions. Attendance at any given session ranged from 88% at week one to 66% at week seven. (the above figures are based on all sixteen participating schools).

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Methodology: Quantitative

Figure 1: Flow chart showing progression of families through the study.



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Methodology: Qualitative

Methodology: Qualitative

Participants

Three types of qualitative methods were used during this test:

1. Focus groups with parents
2. Focus groups with school staff
3. Questionnaire responses

Save the Children staff held: three pre parent focus groups (two in Scotland and one in Wales); two post programme focus groups with parents (both in Scotland); one post focus group with school staff (Scotland); and one focus group with parents 3 months after completion of the programme (North of England). Qualitative data was also collected in the questionnaires provided to the sixteen schools and was included in the analysis. All of focus group participants were female.

Procedure

Focus groups were organised by the school co-facilitator but held by a member of SCUK, with the school co-facilitator or SCUK Trainer not present. All parents in schools that took part in focus groups and who had been involved in the programme were invited to participate in both focus groups, with participation voluntary.

Parents and schools were given information sheets explaining the purpose of the focus groups and what to expect on the day.

During pre focus groups, a number of generic open-ended questions were asked to try and tease out certain themes, such as: why participants signed up to the programme; what activities they do at home with their child; places they go to with their child; whether they feel parents have a role in their child's learning and specifically if they feel they can make a difference in their learning; what does the school communicate about their child/ren's learning and whether they would like the school to share more information. During post programme and 3 month follow-up, questions reflected back on any changes from the beginning of the programme, such as: what they liked and did not like; barriers to attending; what worked or did not work and whether there were any improvements they would make for the programme (see Annexes B, C, D for examples of the templates and information sheets shared with parents).



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Findings: Quantitative findings

Findings

The overall goal of the evaluation was to determine whether the programme has the potential to positively impact on children and parents attending and to generate learning from children, parents and staff participating that can be used to inform the programme development and delivery.

Quantitative findings

Enjoyment, satisfaction and parent perceived influence of the programme on the family

At post programme delivery, nearly all (97% (93)) of parents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they really enjoyed the Families Connect programme. Nearly all (94.7% (91)) of parents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that their child really enjoyed the Families Connect programme. Similarly, 90.6% (87) of parents perceived the influence of Families Connect on what they and child do together at home. Furthermore, 75% (72) of parents perceived an influence of the programme on other members of the family at home. Overwhelmingly, 97% (93) said that they would recommend Families Connect to others and 67.7% (59) said that they had already.

At three-month follow-up the majority of parents who completed the questionnaire (91.1% (41)) perceived an impact of families connect on what they do with their child in the home and 75.5% (34) perceived an influence of the programme on other members of the family at home.

Post Programme:

- 97% (93) of parents said they really enjoyed the programme
- 94.7% (91) of parents said their child really enjoyed the programme
- 90.6% (87) of parents perceived the influence of Families Connect on what they and their child do together at home
- 75% (72) of parents perceived an influence of the programme on other members of the family at home
- 97% (93) said that they would recommend Families Connect to others
- 67.7% (59) said that they had recommended Families Connect to others already

At three-month follow-up:

- 91.1% (41) perceived an impact of Families Connect on what they do with their child in the home
- 75.5% (34) perceived an influence of the programme on other members of the family at home

Teacher perceived influence on child's academic ability

Teachers were asked to report on participating children's overall academic ability, reading ability and math ability at all three time points relative to other children (i.e. within the lowest 10%). From pre to post programme, 19.4% (22) of pupils were reported to have improved in overall academic ability whereas 12.3% (14) decreased. Teacher reports of participating children's progress in reading ability were more marked between pre and post programme; 26.5% (30) improved whereas 12.4% (14) decreased. Teacher reports of participating children's progress in math ability between pre and post programme were 24.8% (28) improved whereas 13.2% (15) decreased. At three-month follow-up the overall trend of improvement in child academic ability between pre and post programme reported by teachers was no longer evident. We could not identify any noteworthy trends with regard to negative performers (see Annex F for more information on this).

Post Programme:

- 19.2% (22) of pupils were reported to have improved in overall academic ability
- 12.3% (14) of pupils were reported to have decreased in overall academic ability
- 26.3% (30) of pupils were reported to have improved in reading ability
- 12.3% (14) of pupils were reported to have decreased in reading ability
- 24.5% (28) of pupils were reported to have improved in maths ability
- 13.2% (15) of pupils were reported to have decreased in maths ability

No overall trend was evident at three-month follow-up.

FAMILIES CONNECT

Findings: Quantitative findings

Child outcomes

Child receptive vocabulary was measured at pre, post and three-month follow-up through an age-standardised teacher-based assessment (BPVS3). Significant improvements were assessed based on t-test comparison of means across pre and post programme and between pre programme and three-month follow-up. Significant differences were identified for the participating group both between pre programme and post programme receptive vocabulary mean standardized scores, and between pre programme and three-month follow-up. Pre programme mean score = 96.1 ($SD= 11.7$) and post programme mean score = 99.4 ($SD= 11.8$) ($t=-3.3$ (76) $p<.001$). With regard to the 3 month follow up, participating group children's pre programme mean score was 96 ($SD= 11.6$) and 3 month follow up mean score = 98.4 ($SD= 11.2$) ($t= 2.1$ (63) $p<.05$). There was also no significant difference between intervention and control group means at three months (see Annex G, p. 53). Children from the participating group made significant improvements in their receptive vocabulary, with the mean score moving approximately three and one points closer to the expected age-appropriate standard score of 100. Out of the 68 children assessed at pre programme and at three-month follow-up, 57.3% of children's standardised scores improved, 4.4% remained the same and 38.2% decreased. For those participating children who improved, the average increase was 8.7 points. Approximately 11.8% of participating children who submitted pre and three month follow-up tests moved from below age-appropriate standardised scores to at or above.

Child softer skills were measured within the teacher questionnaire using a bespoke scale developed to be an age appropriate assessment of children's attitudes and behaviours towards school and learning such as general progress, motivation, concentration and enjoyment. The scale includes a range of statements such as 'Child wants to learn new things' and 'Child can concentrate and work independently', to which the teacher rates on a six point likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (a full version of the scale is included in Annex E). Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the scale, which was considered excellent when applying standard criteria at pre programme, post programme and three-month follow-up; $\alpha \geq 0.9$ at each time point (Cronbach, 1951; George and Mallery, 2003). Significant improvements were assessed based on paired t-test comparison of means across pre and post programme and between pre programme and three-month follow-up. A significant difference was evident in child softer skills as reported by teachers between pre-programme assessment and post programme assessment for the 105 children where measures were completed at pre and post programme time points. Pre programme mean score = 54 ($SD= 10.5$) and post

programme mean score = 57.3 ($SD= 9.2$), ($t= -4.45$ (104) $p <.001$). The overall impact was sustained over time with a significant difference evident for the 54 children where measures were completed at pre programme and three-month follow-up. Pre programme mean score = 51.8 ($SD=11.8$) and three-month follow-up mean score = 55.1 ($SD= 12.4$), ($t=-2.7$ (53) $p<.01$). Fifteen schools completed measures of children's softer skills at the three time points for controls and participating children. Independent sample t-tests did not produce any significant differences between the participating and control children in softer skills at preprogramme, post programme or at three-month follow-up.

Child behaviour at home and at school was assessed using teacher and parent report versions of the SDQ. Significant improvements in behaviour were found between pre and post programme for the children participating on the teacher reported SDQ. Total difficulties pre programme score mean = 8.1 ($SD=6.2$) compared to post programme mean = 7 ($SD=5.8$), ($t=2.5$ (100) $p<.05$) and subscales: peer relationship problems pre mean = 1.7 ($SD=1.9$) compared to post mean = 1.2 ($SD=1.6$), ($t=3.5$ (106) $p<.001$) and pro-social behaviour mean = 6.7 ($SD=2.3$) compared to mean = 7.4 ($SD=2.5$), ($t=-3.6$ (100) $p<.001$). No significant difference in child behaviour was found for the subscale of conduct problems, emotional symptoms, hyperactivity/inattention. The only subscale for which a significant difference was identified at three-month follow-up was the hyperactivity/inattention, with pre mean = 4.8 ($SD=3.4$) and 3 month follow-up mean = 4.2 ($SD=3.6$) ($t=2.2$ (49) $p<.05$). No significant differences were noted for the rest, suggesting the impact on child behaviour as perceived by the teacher faded over time. Significant differences were noticed in control children between pre programme and three-month follow-up scores for total difficulties, conduct problems and hyperactivity, as well as peer relationships pre and post programmes (see Table 3). No significant differences were noticed for the rest. Comparison of baseline pre-scores across all participating schools which returned teacher questionnaires showed significant differences between participating and control children for peer relationships and pro-social behaviour, with the former having higher peer relationship problem and lower pro-social behaviour scores. There were no significant differences evident between participants and control children in the schools which returned teacher questionnaires for both groups as assessed by independent sample t-tests at the other two time points. At post programme parental report of child behaviour, significant differences were only found in the pro-social behaviour subscale, with pre programme mean = 8 ($SD=1.7$) compared to post programme mean = 8.3 ($SD=1.6$), ($t=-2.05$ (79) $p<.05$). At three-month follow-up, significant differences for the pro-social behaviour scale were found for

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Findings: Quantitative findings

total difficulties, with pre mean =8.1 ($SD=1.7$) compared to follow-up mean =8.7 ($SD=1.5$), ($t=-2.2$ (36) $p<.05$).

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Findings: Quantitative findings

Table 3: Child outcomes – Difference in mean scores between pre and post-programme

	Participant group			Control group			Difference in improvement	
	Pre	Post	P-value	Pre	Post	P-value	Mean difference in improvement	P-value
Receptive vocabulary (BPVS3)	96.1	99.4	$p<.001$	98.5	99.3	ns	2.5	$p<.01$
Softer skills	54	57.3	$p<.001$	56.7	57.1	ns	2.9	$p<.05$
<i>Behaviour</i>								
<i>Teacher report SDQ</i>								
Total difficulties	8.1	7	$p<.05$	6.6	6	ns	-0.5	ns
Conduct problems	0.6	0.8	ns	0.7	0.6	ns	-0.1	ns
Emotional	1.7	1.6	ns	1.2	1.1	ns	0	ns
Hyperactivity/inattention	4.1	3.8	ns	3.5	3.5	ns	-0.2	ns
Peer relationship problems	1.7	1.2	$p<.001$	1.2	0.9	$p<.05$	-0.2	ns
Pro-social behaviour	6.7	7.4	$p<.001$	7.5	7.5	ns	0.7	$p<.05$
<i>Parent report SDQ</i>								
Total difficulties	9.3	8.8	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct problems	1.4	1.1	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Emotional	2.2	2.0	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Hyperactivity/inattention	4.3	4	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Peer relationship problems	1.4	1.4	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Pro-social behaviour	8	8.3	$p<.05$	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4: Child outcomes difference in mean scores between pre and three-month follow-up

	Participant group			Control group			Difference in improvement	
	Pre	3mnth	P-value	Pre	3mnth	P-value	Mean difference in improvement	P-value
Receptive vocabulary (BPVS3)	96	98.4	$p<.05$	97.9	99.4	ns	0.9	ns
Softer skills	51.8	55.1	$p<.01$	55.8	58.4	$p<.05$	0.8	ns
<i>Behaviour</i>								
<i>Teacher report SDQ</i>								
Total difficulties	9.4	8.2	ns	6.7	5.3	$p<.05$	0.3	ns
Conduct problems	1	0.9	ns	0.9	0.5	$p<.05$	0.2	ns
Emotional	1.8	1.6	ns	0.9	0.9	ns	-0.1	ns
Hyperactivity/inattention	4.8	4.2	$p<.05$	3.9	3.1	$p<.01$	0.3	ns
Peer relationship problems	2.2	1.8	ns	1.2	0.9	ns	-0.1	ns
Pro-social behaviour	6.4	6.8	ns	7.1	7.4	ns	0.1	ns
<i>Parent report SDQ</i>								
Total difficulties	10	8	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct problems	1.4	0.9	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Emotional	2.1	1.8	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Hyperactivity/inattention	4.3	3.5	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Peer relationship problems	1.8	1.6	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Pro-social behaviour	8.1	8.7	$p<.05$	-	-	-	-	-

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Findings: Quantitative findings

Parent outcomes

Parental involvement and engagement in education was measured through self-report scales of parent role construction and parent self-efficacy. A significant negative difference was identified for parental role construction pre =54.1 (SD= 4.4) and post programme =52.6 (SD=5) ($t=2.9$ (82) $p<.05$) that disappeared at the three-month follow-up stage, indicating that there was no relevant long term effect. Significant improvements were evident in parent's perceptions of self-efficacy between pre and post programme mean score = 31.6 (SD=6) compared to mean score =34 (SD=5), ($t=-4.0$ (74) $p< .001$) and between pre and three-month follow-up, mean score= 31.8 (SD=6.9) compared to mean score =33.8 (SD=6.6), ($t=-2.2$ (33) $p< .05$)).

Teacher perception of parent engagement in education and efficacy was also measured. Significant improvements in teacher perception of parent engagement were evident between pre and post programme scores for participants mean score = 32.6 (SD=6.5) compared to mean score = 33.8 (SD=6.6), ($t=-2.2$ (95) $p<.05$)). No significant effects were evident at three-month follow-up, suggesting that impact may have faded over time. Caution should be

taken as to whether changes in teacher's perception of parental involvement can be attributed to the programme; similar significant improvements were found for the control children between pre and post programme mean score =31.2 (SD=7.6) compared to mean score =32.6 (SD=7.8), ($t=-2.4$ (80) $p<.05$)) without similar significant differences between pre and three-month follow-up. No significant differences in mean scores were found at either pre, post programme and three month follow-up between control and intervention groups in the 15 schools that submitted both participant and control data.

Additionally, no significant differences were found for parental reports of self-esteem over the three time periods, or for parental reports on the home learning environment index total score or subscales of home computing, enrichment activities, or expressive play over time. Parental reports highlighted a significant positive effect on interaction, as significant differences were found between pre (=9.6) (SD=1.8) and post programme (=10.3) (SD=1.6) ($t=-3.5$ (83) $p<.001$), as well as between pre (=9.8) (SD=1.6) and three-month follow-up =10.6 (SD=1.4) ($t=2.9$ (38) $p<0.05$).

Table 5: Parent outcomes difference in mean scores between pre and post programme

	Participant group			Control group		
	Pre	Post-	P-value	Pre	Post	P-value
Parent role construction	54.1	52.6	$p<0.05$	-	-	-
Parent self-efficacy						
Parent report	31.6	34	$p<.001$	-	-	-
Teacher report	32.6	33.8	$p<.05$	31.2	32.6	$p<.05$
Self-esteem	21.4	21.6	ns	-	-	-
Home learning environment	32.2	33.7	ns	-	-	-

Table 6: Parent outcomes difference in mean scores between pre and three-month follow-up

	Participant group			Control group		
	Pre	3 mnth	P-value	Pre	3 mnth	P-value
Parent role construction	54.3	53.4	ns	-	-	-
Parent self-efficacy						
Parent report	31.8	33.8	$p<.05$	-	-	-
Teacher report	32.2	32.7	ns	31.2	31.6	ns
Self-esteem	23.2	22.8	ns	-	-	-
Home learning environment	32.1	33.6	ns	-	-	-

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Qualitative findings

Qualitative findings

The purpose of the qualitative research was to identify core themes that capture some of the underlying dynamics and intricate patterns that emerge in complex social interventions such as Families Connect that may not be so easily identified in quantitative measures. In Autumn 2016, 139 Families signed up to take part in the programme, with 95 completing (68% retention rate). Three pre focus groups (n=12), three post focus groups (two immediately after 8 week programme (n=10) and one focus group three months after (n=5) were conducted with parents. One post focus group with school staff was also conducted. Qualitative findings were also collated from the parent and teacher questionnaires that were completed as part of the main evaluation for the programme and are included in the findings (n= 95 parents, 66 teachers).

Focus group objectives included:

1. To ascertain a situational analysis of where the families are (context of their lives pre and post Families Connect)
2. To examine whether there has been any reported impact since taking part in the programme
3. To gather feedback from the parents and teachers on programme content and delivery

This chapter will explore the context of the families who signed up to Families Connect and discuss themes identified during reporting on the impact the programme has had on the children and parents. We will conclude with the participant feedback that was received to inform future delivery and implementation of the programme.

Family Context

School staff reported those who engaged in recruitment and signed up for Families Connect, were found to be parents who were already accessing additional support or engaged with the school. Table 6 illustrates support that parents who had signed up to Families Connect had accessed prior to starting the programme. However, they noted frustrations regarding being unable to reach those 'harder to reach parents' who were less engaged with support in or outside of school.

"The school signed up for parent engagement and we were successful, in that, the ones that we got came along and engaged and by the end they were very talkative about [...] their feedback. All super, but it's getting the rest in, it's the ones that don't come, that you want to focus on."

Table 6.

Support accessed prior to Families Connect	
Families and Schools together (FAST) one parent partner, working as part of the team	Early Years Together
Maths and Literacy workshops	ASD support group
Chatterbugs	Language and Play
Homework workshops	Arts and Crafts workshops
Parent groups	Grow the grown ups
PEEP course	Healthy Eating
6 week course to help child learning maths/English	Read write Inc
CBS Naiscoil ne Parc Glais	School Maths support

Parent role construction is identified as a motivator for involvement behaviours (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Sheldon 2002) and parents reported strong beliefs and attitudes about their role in their child's learning prior to taking part in the programme. All parents that took part in the focus groups before the programme felt it was their responsibility to help their children learn; this included helping them learn new words by reading to them and showing them new things, talking to them, encouraging them and keeping routines.

Parents stated:

"Parent role is definitely very important in child's learning; parents learn the basics."

School staff also noted:

"to be honest, they already know that they are good role models to their children, they know how to look after their children well."

Consistent with this, parents wanted to build on existing knowledge and skills and learn new techniques to support their child's development.

"I'd like to be able to do more and I do try but I think it could be a lot better; you can always improve."

Parents reported barriers such as time constraints, language and doing things in a contradictory way to the way children learn at school when supporting their child's learning.

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Qualitative findings

Parent motivation to take part in Families Connect

"I want to be a good Mum and I want to understand my children"
"[...] to become a better parent."

Consistent with our findings from the Summer 2016 evaluation of the programme, prior to signing up to Families Connect, parents' perception of Families Connect were that it provided an innovative opportunity to improve existing parenting skills at home to provide their child with increased chances of succeeding at school and in life. The findings from Summer 2016, suggested that 'school engagement in Families Connect and/or previous exposure to an intervention based within the school' was one of the primary motivators to signing up to the programme, however this was not frequently reported in the Autumn term responses (n=6), with desire 'to understand and support their child's development and education' emerging as the primary driver for more than half of the respondents, correlating with initial perception of the programme.

Four key **motivators** emerged from respondents in Autumn 2016:

1. To understand and support their child's development and education (n=74)

More than half of the respondents reported that they wanted to understand and support their child's development and/or education. The responses varied in types of support, most noted, improvements in home learning environment (to provide them with techniques to try and engage children in their homework, keep their attention and support their education), improving their child's confidence and softer skills and/or strategies to help with specific emotional or behaviour concerns.

Improvements in Home learning Environment:

"I just want to know, keen to know anything that is going to further his education, cause I don't know the best way to help him, it was a lifetime ago since I was in school so just any hints and tips that help me, help him."

"I want to have as many tools as possible to help my son make the most out of learning and enjoy the educational process."

Improving Child's Confidence to Learn:

"To help understand my child's feelings and attitude as she begins her school life. To be aware and willing to give support to my child and her teachers"

"We were interested in our child's learning. We wanted to support him and learn new activities and get him more confident."

Emotional and behaviour Concerns:

"I am hoping the programme will support me (& my partner) to develop our relationship with our daughter and manage her behaviour more positively and effectively."

"He was just diagnosed with Autism. This Summer I would like to learn techniques to connect with him and help him."

2. One to one time with their children (n=24)

Another driver that parents identified was the opportunity to have one to one time with their child; this was emphasised in families with more than two children and families who had a child with disabilities.

"Spend quality time with my child, learn new techniques and give my other children time to socialise with others in the childcare provided."

"I would also like to spend time with him so he knows he can approach me to discuss any issues with me at any time"

A teacher reported that *"for one in particular it gave her time with her son, just one on one, which she doesn't get with another disabled child at home."*

3. To build parenting skills, personal learning and confidence (n=17)

Parents also were motivated by the idea of learning new skills for themselves and increasing their own confidence in general and with their child's learning and communicating with school.

"It's good for me to learn too, I was never smart in that way at school and stuff so I thought it would help both of us"

"School contact, I thought it would be good for my confidence; just to learn new things and get new ideas."

4. Meet new people and build social networks (n=11)

Another rationale that parents reported for signing up to Families Connect was to meet other parents and share experiences and tips, to have peer support from people who are in similar situation as themselves.

"To have insight into other families views."

"[...] meet other parents in the school and to support school programmes."

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Qualitative findings

General feedback on the overall experience

In line with the quantitative data, most of the parents reported great enjoyment of the programme for themselves and their child.

Parents on their enjoyment of the Programme:

"I really enjoyed it! Made friends. Learnt lots."

"I have really enjoyed this course. It gave me many tips how to help my children to improve their learning and be happier."

Parents on their children's enjoyment:

"Everything was brilliant, delivered perfectly and each 'unit' that me and my son attended was really informative and we learned so much together. We both really enjoyed it."

"Child had overall good experience and as parents me and husband gained a lot."

Teachers also reported on the children's enjoyment of going to the sessions and sharing their learnings with their peers in the class.

"He gets very excited to attend the sessions and enjoys showing the class what he has done."

"The child spoke enthusiastically about the time spent in the Families Connect sessions and was keen to share with peers. Enjoyed parent/child interactions in sessions."

However, a few parents (n=3) did note difficulties with concepts, content or keeping their children engaged in the programme:

"Sessions too long, waffly, not enough useful content, feel they would be better aimed at pre-school parents."

"I think there are merits on the programme but I think it needs work. The materials are beautiful, staff were lovely and it was great to meet other parents [...] but my child wasn't impressed with the activities."

"My child has behavioural problems, I found it difficult to get him to participate in the activities as he will not sit still for very long and becomes agitated if he has to do something that he doesn't want to do, but I loved spending time with him all the same."

Teacher and parent perceived impact

The majority of parents and teachers perceived that the programme had influenced the children (learning, behaviour and softer skills), parents (self-efficacy, school engagement

and peer relationships) and parent-child relationships (increased one on one time, improved communication and understanding) that had directly taken part in the programme. The following section identifies themes that emerged from the teacher and parent data about specific impact they had perceived.

Home Learning Environment (HLE) (n=12 teachers; n=31 parents)

Parents reported that Families Connect had a positive impact on how they interact with their children and how they interact with their learning and homework by providing children with new ways to express themselves. Some parents felt the programme had provided new insights into ways of learning at home and had increased the amount of reading and incorporating numeracy and literacy at home.

Parents reported:

"When we go outside, if we are going to the car then we point to the signs, traffic lights and car number plates and when we are in the supermarket we do counting, how many things we are picking up from the store, how many foods, or can they show us which shelf we need to go to, they help us find things. With this process they learn lots of new things."

"We count when we bake - 2 cups of flour, two eggs.....and he is saying 'flour, egg, sugar' - he is enjoying cooking and baking."

Teachers reported:

"Parent now has an increased awareness of how supporting your child at home can improve their achievement in school. Now works much more at home with reading."

"Parents have become more consistent in their homework support over term two."

One on one engagement (n=7 teacher, n=22 parent)

Many parents referred to the benefit and enjoyment of getting the one on one time with their children at Families Connect that they do not get at home. The programme has been reported as beneficial in helping parents communicate and interact with their children, specifically in how they interact with their learning at home and homework by giving them new ways to express themselves.

Parents reported:

"Families Connect helped me to spend more quality time with my youngest child as having 4 children means I have to 'share' myself among them to cater to their needs and I rarely get time alone with him so it was nice to have the opportunity to play and learn

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with him 1-on-1.”

“Was a great group for me and child to do stuff together and sometimes I forget how much my son learns day to day.”

Teacher reported:

“The parent is now planning quality time to spend with her child. They are playing the games they were given at Families Connect and are enjoying the experiences. The parent now has a good understanding of the different ways they can support their child.”



A daughter enjoys playing a counting game together with her mother.

Child behaviour and softer skills (n=9 teacher; n=12 parent)

Both parents and teachers reported improvements in child behaviour, confidence, listening skills and expressions of emotions.

Parents reported:

“It showed my son how to share their feelings and also how to share more. He also learned from this and is more interested in new task.”

“They are getting more confident and much better with stories and numbers.”

Teacher reported:

“Child less anxious and more confident in class, more social in class, less attention seeking.”

“I think this programme made the pupil more confident and at ease in class. They are quite nervous and this built his confidence in literacy and reading where they struggled before.”

Understanding, empathy and communication (n=parents 12)

The programme was beneficial in helping parents communicate with their children and provided an opportunity for the one-to-one time with the individual child, bringing them closer in their relationship. Parents spoke about the programme reminding them to listen to their children and changed how the parent interacted with their children, providing them with space to reflect on their relationship with their child.

Parent reported:

“Far more aware of how difficult the tasks the children do are [...] I am far more patient now, realise it is really hard for him and make sure I include praise, the more I praise the better he does and he wants to do it more.”

“We are the mums we understand them better than everyone in the world, but through Families Connect I have a better understanding of how difficult it can be to learn, now I am actually like this is actually really hard for them to do and why he gets so emotional about school work whereas before I would just say - you are just tired, get on with it.”

Parent self-efficacy (n=10 teachers; n=9 parents)

Parents reported being more confident and reflective in their parenting, thinking about the role of praise and actively listening to their children. Teachers also reported parents becoming more confident and relaxed in the school environment and with their child's learning.

Parents reported:

“If I was reading a book and he strayed I would try and take him back but I have learnt it's not about reading the book it's about letting his imagination run wild, makes it more enjoyable, I just need to chill out a bit. [...] letting them talk about what's going on outside the window, not just assuming they are acting up, now I ask questions and encourage.”

“It has made me be more reflective as a parent – thinking about praising, being positive, listening to children ‘properly’ to enhance relationships with child.”

Teacher reported:

“Mum more confident in herself and approaching school for help, support, advice.”

“Mum became so much more relaxed and it enabled her to feel part of the group and make new friends (EAL).”

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Qualitative findings

School engagement. (n=8 teachers; n=10 parents)

Parents and Teachers both reported increased parent engagement and involvement in school following Families Connect. Three months after the programme, they reported parents helping out on school trips, in class, families involved in new learning zone, parents setting up support groups and families generally being more confident about coming into coming into school.

Teachers reported:

"They see you slightly differently other than just the class teacher, see you as a bit more approachable.... and feeling more confident coming into the school."

"Mum is heavily involved in schools new family learning zone. Parent also helps weekly in school."

One parent reported how she and another parent were inspired by families Connect to set up a parent support group:

"The group has inspired me and [...] to do something we have been meaning to do, we went to a parent network group, Parenting Matters, and then we continued going through all of the training and we got trained to be mentors and volunteers and stuff and they have been trying to get us to set up a support group for ages and the two of us were unsure but then we enjoyed this group so much. Afterwards everyone had said how much they had enjoyed it so [...] in January we are finally going to set up a parent support group in the school."

Social capital (n=8 teachers; n=17 parents)

Parents stated that they liked working in a group, they enjoyed meeting new people, and that this group helped to build confidence and provided support. Families Connect offered a support network and an opportunity to have adult conversation with people who were going through similar experiences, reducing feelings of alienation. Parents spoke about on-going support after the programme with support groups they had set up, enjoying more play dates with other families from the programme social media groups to keep in touch.

Teachers reported:

"Helped to forge a stronger relationship with mum EAL family and give mum circle of friends."

"There has been a positive engagement and a strong sense of well-being created for this child as a member of the Families Connect community."

Parents reported:

"I enjoyed it very well because we were working together with parents, we made new friends. We came here and would say hello to each other but through the course we became closer to each other and we were working with the teachers and the children."

"[...]It makes me feel better when I come out as I know I am not the only one; it showed me that I wasn't alone."

No perceived impact: (n=6 teachers; n=2 parents)

It is important to note that immediately after the programme, in both the questionnaire responses and focus group with school staff, a number (n=6) of teachers did not perceive any impact on the child or parents that had taken part in the programme.

Two school staff who took part in the focus group reported:

"It is too soon to say if any changes to behaviour, it has only just finished, any changes put in place through Families Connect, you don't see the results of this straight away, you don't see it with anything, for changes at home and how they behave and react, it takes time for this to filter through to the every day, I mean you get the occasional ones that you get that are cheery and they smile at you, but it will be a while before you start notice tangible changes."

Two teachers in the three month follow-up questionnaires noted they still could not identify any impact on the children.

Feedback on programme content and structure

Parents noted the benefit of learning the theory and practical activities combined as well as how friendly and welcoming the staff were.

"It was great that you learned the theory and had the chance to try it out on each other and your own child."

They fed back about the quality of the materials and activities, which they indicated had helped to engage the child and the wider family at home.

"The activities were eye catching for both me & my daughter; the illustrations are perfect & family members also commented on how good each activity looked. My daughter & I enjoyed each

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activity; it made learning fun; it was also great to see my daughter explain what she learned at the session each week to her father, sister and to see them engage in the activity too."

In the post questionnaires, teachers reported wanting to know more about what is happening in FC to offer further support in the classroom and understand what the children were doing in the weekly groups.

Some parents suggested that it would be useful to have more weeks and a few parents indicated that more or extended parent time would be beneficial within the sessions, however others reported that they felt the timing of the programme was just right. There were suggestions that the programme and its learnings should be available to all parents who have children in the class or school.

"Some of the things learnt at FC should be available for all parents throughout the school eg. The Teens & Tys, as I was confident with my child's counting progress until we covered this subject at FC & so it did help me to identify this issue at an early stage."

The majority of feedback on the modules was positive, especially with regards to numeracy and literacy, however one parent noted their dislike for apps and preferred to engage their children through reading books.

"I appreciate that I need to make reading fun to get my kids 'hooked' to it, but they already love it. And reading books are fun in and of themselves without needing to involve technology - and that's what I want my kids to learn."

Another parent indicated that the numeracy activity should increase in levels of difficulty as it became easy for her children and therefore difficult to keep him engaged. In line with this, A number of parents suggested that the programme needs to engage children more (i.e. ensuring that topics were age appropriate or making the child activities reflective of the parent time activities), others suggested expanding the programme to accommodate older children.

"Thought child activities would be reflected in what parents were doing. Child and me disappointed that the group of children weren't doing anything as a group like the parents were doing. Perhaps this could be included in next programme."

The social and emotional modules were the most divided in feedback; some really enjoyed the modules and found them particularly useful, others felt uncomfortable with the activities, especially in the early weeks, and one parent indicated it should be reduced to two weeks.

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Discussion

The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis support the programme model and overall the evaluation provides evidence of the potential for programme effectiveness and sustainable impact for families. To some extent, both parent and child intended outcomes are being met as a result of participation on the programme, and the test has generated significant learning that will continue to inform the programme development for ongoing implementation. Parental satisfaction with the programme was very high, with nearly all of parents who completed post questionnaires reporting that they (97%) and their child (95%) had really enjoyed taking part. Rates of retention and attendance of the programme were high, with 68% of those participants who attended at least one session of Families Connect attended a minimum of six sessions. Attendance at any given session ranged from highest at 88% at week one to lowest at 66% at week seven.

The results of the quantitative element of the evaluation provide added support to the summer findings for the potential impact of Families Connect on young children's language development, as measured by children's understanding of receptive vocabulary. However, the results differed somewhat from our Summer findings. A post programme effect was identified from pre to post as well as a significant difference in mean scores from the control group. This was surprising as we should not expect to see progress in this measure until the three-month follow up. The three-month follow up scores were also significant within the intervention group, demonstrating that scores had significantly improved between baseline scores and post programme, however the control group also improved in their three-month follow up scores (not significant) and therefore no significant effects in the between group analysis were identified. We noticed that there was a number of children whose academic performance dropped at the end of the project, but examination into this issue did not reveal any trends that might indicate some form of causation (see Annex F).

Teacher-reported child outcomes produced a similar story. Teachers reported 19% improvement in academic outcomes; 26% in reading and 25% in maths ability across the cohort. At 8 weeks teachers had reported significant differences in the child's softer skills, peer relationships and pro social behaviour. When compared to the control group, the softer skills and pro-social behaviour effects on the intervention group were sustained and there was a significant difference in their mean scores from those in the control group. However, a significant improvement on peer relationships

was also seen in the control group and again this resulted in no difference between mean scores across the groups. By the three month follow-up, teachers continued to report significant improvements in softer skills within the intervention group, but this was also evident in the control group. Hyperactivity/inattention was also reported to have decreased in the intervention group, however this effect was not significant when compared to the controls. The findings related to teacher-reported gains in participating children's softer skills demonstrate the potential impact of the programme on children's attitudes and behaviour towards school and learning, which were sustained over time. The evaluation also provides evidence on the immediate impact of the programme on child behaviour (specifically peer relationships and pro social behaviour) at school, although these effects were not sustained over time. Parents' perceptions of improvements in child behaviour were also evident immediately post programme and at three month follow-up. However, we did not have parent-reported outcomes for the control group so were unable to compare mean scores across the two groups.

It is plausible that the positive outcomes for the control group children resulted from spill-over effects from the intervention children (and in some cases, the teacher) who were in the same classroom as the control children. We have no information pertaining to whether they have used the resources outside of Families Connect, or enough evidence to indicate whether the programme effects spill over to the wider class. However, the findings from the qualitative element of the evaluation support this theory, with children eager to share what they had learnt with the rest of the class and some of the facilitators from the programme also were the primary class teacher in some of the schools. Furthermore, as identified in the main findings, the lack of rigour over selection of the control group means we cannot be sure that there was no bias in the selection process made by teachers.

The positive impact of the programme on parents was also seen within the quantitative analysis. Immediate effects were identified in parent reported measures of parent role construction; however, this effect faded at the three month follow up. Measures of parent self-efficacy and the parents' belief in their ability to support their children's learning were also reported by parents (and teachers in self efficacy) at 8 weeks, and this was sustained in the parent report at three-month follow-up; however, this was not reported by the teachers at this time.

The findings from the qualitative element of the evaluation provide detailed contextual evidence to support

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understanding of the ways in which the programme has influenced the families taking part. The evaluation has also generated learning that will influence the development and delivery of the programme in future. In line with the findings from Summer 2016 and supporting the quantitative evidence from this evaluation on parent role construction and self-efficacy, the main reasons given by parents as to why they signed up to the programme were that they were interested in further supporting their children's learning and development, and had signed up to the programme to be able to do this more effectively. Both parents and teachers felt there had been positive outcomes for the parents, identifying that they listened to their children more, were calmer and more confident to help their children with their learning at home.

The importance of the qualitative evidence in demonstrating programme impact is clear in the reports by parents that the programme had influenced changes in family communication and interaction; by providing the time and the space for the one on one interactions between the parent and child that many families do not necessarily experience within the home, this was especially true for families with more than two children in the household or families that had a child with a disability. Providing parents with a better understanding of child behaviour and empathy in learning also influenced changes in family communication. This in turn provided parents with new ways to express themselves and indicates an enriched home learning environment that was not evidenced in the quantitative findings.

The qualitative findings provide evidence of improvement and increases in level of parent/school engagement. Both parents and teachers indicated that the programme had provided a platform for the families to meet new friends and build social networks and now they are much more engaged with other families within the school, as well as more engaged in the school community.

Overall, this evaluation has continued to strengthen the evidence base to support the effectiveness of Families Connect to meet its objectives:

- Stimulate the Home Learning Environment; including increasing the confidence and skills of parents and carers and enhancing the activities they do together with their children and their knowledge of how they support learning.
- Model how to approach, engage and work with families (parental engagement).
- Create opportunities for schools and parents to build relationships.

Nonetheless, a number of limitations to the evaluation have been acknowledged, which are described in more detail below. We address these limitations in a separate chapter on considerations and recommendations, which can be found in page 32.

Finally, we also aggregated the data from Summer and Autumn 2016, to have a fuller picture of the In house delivery model that took place in 2016 – more information can be found in Annex J (p. 61). As can be seen below, results for 2016 largely reflect our findings for Autumn 2016 – whereby intervention children improved significantly more in receptive vocabulary, softer skills and pro-social behaviour, compared to control children, at the end of the programme. This effect was no longer visible 3 months after the completion of the programme.

Limitations

1. Small sample sizes and data missing at random

During the Autumn 2016 evaluation, more detailed guidance was provided to teams and schools following high rates of missing data in previous terms; however, we still experienced low return rates, especially in the three-month follow up. The extent of missing quantitative data limited the generalisability of the study and the quality of the statistical analysis. This, apart from reducing the sample size, puts a degree of doubt on the ability of our models to maintain the assumption of normality.

With 139 families taking part in the programme, to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error we would ideally require a sample size of 103 family responses from the intervention group (with an aim to produce findings generalisable to the entire population of 193 families). Therefore, we need to be cautious when considering the results from the three-month follow-up as we cannot be confident that they are representative of the sample. Additionally, the possible range of values in the margin of error is increased (13%, 10% and 10% for parent questionnaire, teacher questionnaire and BPVS respectively), which means that we need to be cautious when interpreting the results.

2. Control group contamination

The findings from the qualitative element of the evaluation support the theory that there was a potential spill-over effect into the control group as they were all from the same classroom and children were eager to share what they had learnt with the rest of the class and additionally, some of the

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facilitators from the programme were also the primary class teacher in some of the schools. Furthermore, there was a lack of rigour over selection of the control group, with teachers selecting the children in the control group, therefore we could not be sure that there was no bias in the selection process made by teachers. This lack of rigour was evident from baseline score differences between intervention and control children (see tables 3-6) – which in some cases, such as total reported difficulties by teachers, were considerable (9.4 for intervention children compared to 6.7 for control – a difference of roughly 30%).

3. Data collection methods

Data collection for Families Connect was the responsibility of Trainers, who collected paper copies of questionnaires and tests from schools across the UK and sent these to the London office of Save the Children. Due to inherent issues in this process (dependency on timely dispatch of data and proper storage, accidental misplacing of forms), there were considerable delays at the analysis stage, as paper copies of data would be received very late or went missing, with some reaching the programme team as late as 2017.

4. Measures

As seen in the Summer 2016 evaluation, the lack of findings related to the home learning environment in the quantitative analysis may be a result of the limitations of the HLE index scale to measure more subtle changes, such as quality rather than quantity of interactions between parent and child. Additionally, although we collect measures of perceived improvements in reading, we do not have a standardised measure to reliably report on significant improvements in numeracy.



A parent and child enjoy spending quality time playing a game together in Families Connect.

5. Long-term effects

The Families Connect evaluation includes a 3 month follow-up from the teachers about the children. It could be argued, however, that three months is only slightly longer than the duration of the programme. This evaluation, therefore, does not speak to the long-term effects (i.e. one year on) of the Families Connect outcomes.

6. Practical vs. Statistical significance

There remains a question of whether the measured outcomes live up to the expectations. Significance testing used in this report answers the question of whether our outcomes are more than zero in an overall population; it does not speak to whether those outcomes are as high as they should be. To this end, we should consider developing an expectation of how big an improvement a child is to undergo as part of the programme. Future evaluation of the programme should test whether Families Connect manages to deliver it.



Children participating in a group activity.

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Discussion

Programme Considerations and Recommendations

Programme content

1. Programme continuation and sustainability

The qualitative evidence suggests there is more to be done to encourage further engagement with families after the eight weeks of Families Connect. Autumn testing had a new resource that summer testing did not have access to; a 'Keeping it Going' guidance document for sustaining contact and learning with families after the programme has finished. However, as discussed in point 11 later in this section, a more in-depth qualitative research piece into the sustained impact of FC over a more long term time period would provide a greater understanding of the potential impact of the programme further than at a three month followup. This could consider impact wider than that considered in the questionnaires and the qualitative focus groups and interviews, as well as investigate engagement with schools that goes beyond the programme horizon.

2. School information sheets

Following the feedback from teachers that they would like more information on what the programme entails week by week, the school information sheets should be reviewed. Further development should be considered to ensure schools are fully aware of the programme detail and are able to cascade this information with their school colleagues to ensure all staff are aware of the programme and expected outcomes before the programme begins.

Programme delivery

3. Parent role construction

The absence of a significant impact on parent role construction and the evidence from the qualitative research suggests that parents participating in Families Connect joined the programme with an existing level of recognition that participating in their children's learning was important, and was possibly the motivating factor for participating in Families Connect. Although this result was similar in Summer term testing, we did not have the results back in time to make any changes for Autumn delivery. We have since reviewed our recruitment guidance document in the delivery manual and strengthened our messaging in the Delivery training to support schools to reach a mix of parents; those who do not see the value in supporting their children's learning and those that do. However, we have

also included in our delivered training to schools the importance of managing expectations of recruiting parents who do not see themselves as having a role in their children's education, especially in first cycles of delivery. We have encouraged discussions around the possible opportunities of peer to peer recruitment in subsequent cycles which might lead to more less engaged parents to sign up to complete the programme.

4. Repeat Cycles

To date, we have not monitored or evaluated repeat cycles of Families Connect in schools and it is recommended that we do so. This will help us gain as much understanding about the role of repeat cycles in supporting the recruitment of parents who might not have an existing understanding of their role in their child's education.

5. Participation of fathers

As was detailed in the demographic findings, significantly fewer fathers attend Families Connect (n=8) than mothers or female family members (n=114). It is recommended that we consider how we could make Families Connect appeal more to fathers or male family members and if there is anything that could be done to support their participation more widely. A Dads-only Families Connect cycle is currently under consideration for a future cycle. Further details about this cycle will be included in subsequent evaluation reports.

6. End of programme drop-out

Although the test sustained a strong retention rate of 68%, it is worth considering if the lower rates of attendance for session seven were due, or linked to, fear or anxiety of the numeracy module. Summer testing identified lowest attendance at weeks six and seven, so numeracy modules are consistently under-attended when compared to the other modules. We need to investigate this drop in numbers for this module further and identify perceived barriers (or the potential effect of sessions prior to the ones identified above) so that we can enable the team to address this. Or could it be that literacy sessions are not as well received/delivered and interest has dropped a bit.

Evaluation

7. British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS)

Despite the fact that the BPVS assessment showed significant increased change at both post programme and three-month follow-up rather than at post programme (after eight weeks of the programme) stage, we still recommend that the sites using BPVS in 2017 do not complete BPVS at a post stage

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but only at a three-month follow-up (leaving 6 months between both stages), which is recommended for recording increases in receptive vocabulary. Changing the point in time this is recorded, rather than adding in an additional data collection stage, will hopefully be palatable for the schools involved. However, we will need to make sure we have the checks in place to support data completion and communicate this change effectively to schools. Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the correct administration of BPVS3; a limited number of questionnaires received was ultimately not used for analysis (leading to discrepancies between the numbers of forms received and ultimately analysed) due to incorrect scoring (e.g. tests finishing earlier than appropriate).

It is important to note that for both Spring and Summer 2017 delivery which followed this Autumn testing, we have implemented the change to only collect BPVS3 at a pre and three-month follow up stage. However, it is recommended that we review the way in which the administration of BPVS3 is covered in the training to Community Practitioners and schools in 2017 and 2018, to strengthen the completion of data sets we receive.

In both our Summer and Autumn 2016 evaluation, although we are seeing a greater improvement in scores overall, we have also seen a number of children decline in BPVS3 scores. There does not appear to be a link between participants who are dropping in scores, who can be found across both intervention and control and evenly spread across schools (see table in Annex G on participants who have declined in scores). This is something we will need to monitor closely and will endeavour to discuss with those conducting the assessment to gather a greater understanding of what is happening. In general, higher percentages of negative performers in a school did not seem to mean lower performance on positive-performing peers (which one could expect if this was due to teacher influence).

There is one final point to be made about the use of BPVS3 which could further elucidate this issue. While it is a standardised instrument which has been used in academic research, the possibility of measurement error cannot be avoided, and individual performance at any given time point may be affected by human behaviour, and variables such as fatigue, practice, general health, concentration level etc. As such, we need to consider how to best indicate the uncertainty surrounding the score in a test, minimise incorrect scoring and examine how we can complement the findings of the test in order to better identify improvements in vocabulary scores.

8. Use of the Home Learning Environment (HLE) scale

A review of the use of the HLE scale was raised in the Summer 2016 evaluation report due to its potential limitation in measuring change in the HLE over time. This is predominantly because it captures the changes in the quantity of interactions and activities that take place in the home, but does not capture improvements in the quality and variety of activities in the home. There were no reported significant increased changes to the HLE of the families who took part in the programme within the quantitative analysis. However, changes were reported by participants within the qualitative data gathered during focus groups and interviews and also during the weekly reflection sessions, with parents reflecting back on how they were doing more 'learning activities' in the home. Although no decision to date has been made to omit this from the evaluation framework, it is recommended that for any external evaluation, this scale is reviewed and its appropriateness discussed.

9. Use of a standardised measure for numeracy

The team has identified the need to capture the impact of Families Connect on children's numeracy, and is currently considering appropriate ways of capturing relevant data, which include using relevant standardised instruments.

10. Monitoring and evaluation tools

Following feedback from parents and teachers regarding the time required to complete the monitoring and evaluation requirements, the ways in which monitoring and evaluation data is gathered for the programme should be considered. For example, more user-friendly methods than the paper-based questionnaire format should be explored and a review of the measures needed for inclusion in future testing should be undertaken to reduce the time requirements for parent and teacher completion. Additionally, colleagues involved in data collection need to be made aware of the importance of collecting data appropriately prior to its submission to the programme team (see previous point on BPVS tests). The team is also committed to looking into how appropriate and user-friendly programme M&E tools are for families with EAL.

11. Further in depth qualitative research into wider school impact of Families Connect

In order to fully understand the wider and more long term impact of Families Connect on both the participating families and the school community, it is suggested that more in-depth qualitative research is carried out.

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12. Monitoring and evaluation management

Although there was a dedicated member of the SC team who processed and monitored the incoming data sets from schools in Autumn term (of which there was not in Summer term 2016), the number of incomplete data sets, especially for the three-month follow up, remained an area of difficulty. Since Autumn term, discussions have been held as to how data completion and school submittance and internal Save the Children management could be made more streamlined, which would involve moving away from paper-based forms. A SC review into data management across all UK Programmes is currently being held and Families Connect is part of this. In the short term however, it is recommended that an immediate alternative to paper-based forms is considered such as creating online versions for teachers and

parents to complete, using an online tool such as Survey Monkey.

13. Child evaluation tools

The use of more child evaluation should be considered to strengthen the way in which children's voices are collected.

14. Considerations over control group sample

To ensure there is no bias in selection of the control group and that our control children are not inadvertently being impacted by the programme from interacting with their peers and teachers within the class, considerations over control child recruitment should be made which include ensuring similarity of base scores, minimisation of the spill-over effect etc.



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FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex A: Demographic tables

Annex A: Demographic tables

Table 1: Demographic information on child from baseline collected through parent and teacher pre questionnaires

		Intervention		Control	
		n	%	n	%
School	Bedford P.S.	12	8.8	0	0
	CBS Armagh	10	7.4	10	9
	Clapham Manor	13	9.6	12	10.9
	Clovenstone PS	5	3.7	0	0
	Dysart PS	8	5.9	8	7.3
	Gracemount Primary	7	5.1	7	6.4
	Kingswood	9	6.6	9	8.2
	Louden-Montgomery	7	5.1	7	6.4
	Mayfield PS	11	8.1	13	11.8
	Scoil and Droichid	6	4.4	0	0
	St. Bridget's	12	8.8	10	9
	St. John's P.S.	4	2.9	4	3.6
	St. John's RC	11	8.1	11	10
	St Leonard's P.S.	9	6.6	7	6.4
	Telferscot	7	5.1	7	6.4
	Windsor Clive	5	3.7	5	4.5
Country	England	52	38.2	39	35.5
	Scotland	63	46.3	56	50.9
	Wales	5	3.7	5	4.5
	Northern Ireland	16	11.8	10	9
Child age	3 years	2	1.5	0	0
	4 years	51	37.5	32	29
	5 years	54	39.7	48	43.6
	6 years	16	11.8	17	15.5
	7 years	1	0.7	0	0
	Missing	12	8.8	13	
School year	Nursery	3	2.2	4	3.6
	Reception	45	33.1	27	24.5
	Year 1 / P1	50	36.8	39	35.5
	Year 2 / P2	25	18.4	19	17.3
	Year 3	2	1.5	2	1.9
Gender	Male	64	47.1	49	44.5
	Female	62	45.6	55	50
	Missing	10		6	
Ethnicity	White British	80	58.8	66	60
	Other	49	36	39	35.5
	Missing	7		5	
Child disability*		5	3.7	2	1.8
	Missing	11		2	
Special educational needs*		17	12.5	5	4.5
	Missing	15		7	
English additional language		20	14.7	16	14.5
	Missing	14		8	

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex A: Demographic tables

Total	136	110
* As recorded by pre programme Teacher's questionnaire.		

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex A: Demographic tables

Table 2: Demographic information on parent from baseline collected through parent pre questionnaires

		Intervention				Intervention	
		n	%			n	%
Gender	Male	8	5.9	Partner qualifications	No qualifications	11	9
	Female	113	92.6		1 GCSE or NVQ level 1	18	14.8
	Missing	1			5 GCSE or NVQ level 2	25	20.5
Relationship to child	Biological parent	113	92.6		1 A-level or NVQ level 3	11	9
	Adoptive parent	4	3.3		1st degree or NVQ Level 4-5	17	13.4
	Grandparent	2	1.6		Higher degree	11	9
	Missing	3			Other	15	12.3
Marital status	Married	51	41.8		Missing	38	
	Co-habiting partner	25	18.4	Total		122	
	Divorced	2	1.6				
	Single	32	26.2				
	Re-married	1	0.8				
	Separated	6	4.9				
	Widowed	1	0.8				
	Missing	4	3.3				
Ethnicity	White British	72	59				
	Other ethnicity	42	34.4				
	Missing	8					
Parent disability		11	9				
	Missing	3					
English additional language		26	21.3				
	Missing	4					
Employment	Full-time	14	11.5				
	Part-time	24	19.7				
	Looking after home	53	43.4				
	Unemployed (seeking)	12	9.8				
	Permanently ill/disabled	5	4.1				
	Retired	1	0.8				
	Other	6	4.9				
	Missing	7					
Total income	<£5,000	23	18.9				
	£5,000-£9,999	9	7.4				
	£10,000-£19,999	32	26.2				
	£20,000-£29,999	12	9.8				
	£30,000-£39,999	7	5.7				
	£40,000-£49,999	4	3.3				
	£50,000 or above	12	9.8				
	Missing	23					
Parent qualifications	No qualifications	10	8.2				
	1 GCSE/NVQ level 1	24	19.7				
	5 GCSEs/NVQ level 2	32	26.2				
	1 A-level /NVQ level 3	15	12.3				
	1 st degree/ NVQ Level 4-5	22	18				
	Higher degree	14	11.5				
	Other	24	19.7				
	Missing	8					

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex B: Focus group information sheet for parents

Annex B: Focus group information sheet for parents

Thank you for considering taking part in the Families Connect Focus group

What is Families Connect?

Families Connect is a programme that aims to support parents to enhance their children's learning through exploring games and fun activities. It runs for eight weeks and involves both the parents and the children who take the learning they have explored in the session to try out at home. Families Connect currently explores social and emotional learning, literacy and numeracy through the medium of play.

Why have I been asked to take part?

Families Connect is a new programme we are currently trying out in schools across the UK. We are trying to find out how the programme works and what difference it makes to the families and children taking part. Consequently we would like to talk to you about why you decided to take part in Families Connect, what you got out of it and your thoughts on how you support your child to learn. We would also like to hear from you about your involvement in your child's school.

What will happen at the focus group?

We would like to keep the focus group informal and relaxed. We will ask you questions relating to the Families Connect Programme, specifically in relation to why you signed up to take part, and how you already support your children at home to learn. All thoughts and ideas you have and share with us is helpful to us. We will record the discussion as it is hard to remember everything you say, we may also take notes at times too.

How long will it take?

The session should take about 1 hour; this is often dependent on the size of the group and how much you have to say.

Why do you want to record the group?

We would like the session to be recorded and transcribed to ensure we capture all of your views and opinions. The recording will only be accessible to 'Save the Children' employees and any further information sharing will be transcribed and anonymised. Therefore, you will not be identifiable to anyone. For example, we would say "One person said this..." or "A number of people mentioned..." or "A parent from Scotland said..."

Is the focus group confidential?

We advocate that the focus groups discussion are kept confidential but that if a matter is shared during the session which suggests a child or person may be at harm or at risk of being hurt then we will follow our safeguarding procedures.

How will my information be used?

Your views will enable us to develop a new programme and assist us in making informed developments to our programmes. This means your views and opinions will be included in internal reports (Save the Children) and possibly also external reports (possible funders, schools, parents and other charities too) to explain how and why we have made changes and amendments to our programme.

What if I change my mind and don't want to take part?

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to change your mind at any time and leave the focus group. We will then not include anything mentioned in the focus group up to that point in the transcription and write up of the focus group.

I would like to contribute, but I am not comfortable with taking part in a focus group.

We value your opinions and would be very happy to do an informal one on one interview with you, if we have the staff capacity to do that, if you would prefer. Just let us know.

How can I find out more information about Save the Children or contact you again in the future?

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex B: Focus group information sheet for parents

**** Insert local Contact details ****

You can find out more about Save the Children and the work of the organisation at any time by visiting the website www.savethechildren.org.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex C: Question sheet for pre-focus groups

Annex C: Question sheet for pre-focus groups

Purpose of the focus group and evaluation questions overview:

1. To get more detail around the key themes of the project (Home Learning Environment, parent/child interaction, relationship with school, empathy for child's learning, supporting child to learn)
2. To ascertain a situation analysis of where families are (the context of their lives before the project).

Key evaluation questions to cover include: What motivated parents to sign up to Families Connect? How do they already support their children to learn? What challenges do they face when supporting their children to learn? How does the school involve them in their child's learning?

Introduction

Give an explanation

Good afternoon. My name is _____ and this is _____. Thank you for coming today.

Present the purpose

We are here today to talk about Families Connect, the programme you have signed up to take part in that is due to begin soon. As you may know we are going to try some of the activities and games out for the first time as it is still in the 'design' phase. We are also trying to find out how the programme works and what difference it makes to the families and children taking part.

We are keen to find out why you decided to take part in Families Connect, what you hope to get out of it and your thoughts on how you already support your child to learn. We would also like to hear from you about your involvement in your child's school.

Just so that you know I am not going to be giving my opinions. It is your ideas that matter. There are no right or wrong answers, you can disagree with each other (but kindly!), and you can change your mind. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Discuss procedure

I or (present colleague) will be recording the session and possibly taking notes at various points through the discussions as it's hard remembering everything after an hour's discussion. It would be nice if we could basically just have a chat about a few things, so feel free to answer whenever you like. It would really help however, if we just had one person speaking at one time. There are a few things to cover so I may move us on at some points if needed. A focus group is a relaxed discussion although we would like to record the discussion to help us type it up afterwards, as it can be hard remembering what everyone said. Is that ok with everyone?

Housekeeping

If you haven't already, please ensure all parents present have completed a focus group consent form and have been given an information sheet, with a complaints and feedback leaflet attached. Please also ensure everyone knows where the toilet is, and any info regarding fire procedures. Teas, coffees and biscuits should ideally be available throughout the session.

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex C: Question sheet for pre-focus groups

Participant introduction

Let's start by everyone sharing their name, and the names and ages of their children perhaps.

NB for facilitator only: a guide to the approach

Qualitative focus groups should in their nature be quite unstructured. The questions should be a guide and provide prompts. Parents should steer the direction of conversations and the facilitator should be there to draw them back in if they go off topic or things get too negative/competitive or there are other bad dynamics (e.g. one person dominating). Ideally the facilitator would be reactive and inquisitive in context to move the conversation naturally to cover all of the areas listed below.

Interview

THEME: motivation for participation in Families Connect

Q.1) First of all we are really keen to find out why you signed up to Families Connect. What appealed to you?

Probe: What about: (if not mentioned)

- learn something
- interested in the topics
- to feel part of the school community
- gets you out of the house
- friend going
- spend quality time with my child
- get time with the teachers
- meet new people

THEME: Situational detail on social capital and enriching side of the home learning environment.

Q.2) We would like to know more about what you already do at home with your child.

What type of things does your child enjoy doing at home on their own?

Is there anything you (or other parent/ carer) do to actively support your child's learning in the home?

Probe: What about (if not mentioned)

- Watching TV together
- Making up stories together
- Listening to your child
- Making up games
- Playing on the computer/ iPad/ tablet/ phone
- Playing with friends/ siblings
- Reading stories
- Reading to your child
- Playing outside
- Dancing to music
- Playing with toys

Q.3) What type of places does your child enjoy going to? Where do you find yourself going regularly outside of the home?

Probe: What about (if not mentioned):

- Friend's house
- Parks/splash pads
- Library
- Museums
- Family member's house (e.g. gran's)
- Soft play
- Shopping
- Farms/zoos etc...

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex C: Question sheet for pre-focus groups

Probe: Do you go to these places for a particular reason?

- Because friends are there
- It's cheap
- It is good for them/healthy
- To get out of the house
- My child likes it
- Because I know it will help them learn about letters/numbers/animals

THEME: Situational detail on what parents see as their expectations in engaging in child's learning at home. What do they identify as their role? How much influence do you feel you have over child's motivation to learn?

Q.4) Do you feel that parents have a role in supporting their children's learning?

Probe: What are the ways in which you can support your children to learn in the home?

- Create positive association with school
- Listening to them read
- Have words or numbers around the house
- Talk to them
- Read books with them
- Sit with them to do homework
- Play puzzles and other games with child

Q.5) Do you feel you can make a difference to your child's learning?

Probe: What barriers may there be to you having an influence?

- Don't know what to do
- Things are different to when I was in school
- He/she doesn't listen to me
- Not a trained teacher
- My child and I always end up fighting
- I get frustrated easily

Theme: Situational detail on parent relationship with school. How does the school communicate with parents – methods and what on? Do you find this helpful? Do you want more information?

Q.6) What does the school tell you regarding your child's learning?

Probe (if not already covered):

- Progress during parents' evening
- What we can be doing at home
- Reading clubs
- How to read with my child
- Areas my child is struggling with and what we can do at home to help them
- Messages about events and clubs
- Homework clubs
- Homework we have to help them with
- A summary each term about what they are doing in the class that term
- Things we can do at home to support my child

Probe: Have you found this helpful?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Kind of

Q.7) Is there anything you feel you would like the school to share more information on?

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex C: Question sheet for pre-focus groups

Probe (if not already covered):

- Progress during parents' evening
- What we can be doing at home
- Reading clubs
- How to read with my child
- Areas my child is struggling with and what we can do at home to help them
- Messages about events and clubs
- Homework clubs
- Homework we have to help them with
- A summary each term about what they are doing in the class that term
- Things we can do at home to support my child

Closure

Is there anything else you think would be useful for us to know? Thank you very much for coming this morning/afternoon. Your time is very much appreciated and your comments have been very helpful. I hope you enjoy Families Connect!

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex D: Question sheet for post-focus group

Annex D: Question sheet for post-focus group

Purpose of the focus group & Evaluation Questions Overview:

1. To get more detail around the key themes of the project (Home Learning Environment, parent/child interaction, relationship with school, empathy for child's learning, supporting child to learn)
2. To ascertain a situation analysis of where families are (the context of their lives after the project).

Key evaluation questions to cover include: What motivated parents to sign up to Families Connect? How do they support their children to learn? What challenges do they face when supporting their children to learn? How does the school involve them in their child's learning? What do the parents do differently as a result of taking part in Families Connect?

Introduction

Give an explanation

Good afternoon. My name is _____ and this is _____. Thank you for coming today.

Present the purpose

We are here today to talk about Families Connect, the programme you have been involved in over the past eight weeks. As you may know some of the activities and games were new and we were trying them out for the first time as it is still in the 'design' phase. We are also trying to find out how the programme works and what difference it makes to the families and children taking part.

We are keen to find out why you decided to take part in Families Connect, what you got out of it and your thoughts on how you support your child to learn. We would also like to hear from you about your involvement in your child's school.

Just so that you know I am not going to be giving my opinions. It is your ideas that matter. There are no right or wrong answers, you can disagree with each other (but kindly!), and you can change your mind. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Discuss procedure

I or (present colleague) will be recording the session and possibly taking notes at various points through the discussions as it's hard remembering everything after an hour's discussion. It would be nice if we could basically just have a chat about a few things, so feel free to answer whenever you like. It would really help however, if we just had one person speaking at one time. There are a few things to cover so I may move us on at some points if needed. A focus group is a relaxed discussion although we would like to record the discussion to help us type it up afterwards, as it can be hard remembering what everyone said. Is that ok with everyone?

Housekeeping

If you haven't already, please ensure all parents present have completed a consent form and have been given an information sheet, with a complaints and feedback leaflet attached. Please also ensure everyone knows where the toilet is and any info regarding fire procedures. Teas, coffees and biscuits should ideally be available throughout the session.

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex D: Question sheet for post-focus group

Participant introduction

Let's start by everyone sharing their name, and the names and ages of their children perhaps.

NB for facilitator only: a guide to the approach

Qualitative focus groups should in their nature be quite unstructured. The questions should be a guide and provide prompts. Parents should steer the direction of conversations and the facilitator should be there to draw them back in if they go off topic or things get too negative/competitive or there are other bad dynamics (e.g. one person dominating). Ideally the facilitator would be reactive and inquisitive in context to move the conversation naturally to cover all of the areas listed below.

Interview

THEME: motivation for participation in FC and whether expectations were met

Q.1) First of all we are really keen to find out why you signed up to Families Connect. What appealed to you?

Probe: What about: (if not mentioned)

- learn somethin,
- interested in the topics
- to feel part of the school community
- gets you out of the house
- friend going
- spend quality time with my child
- get time with the teachers
- meet new people

Q.2) Did Families Connect meet your expectations?

Probe:

- Did FC exceed expectations?
- Did it not meet expectations
- If so, in what way? Or not?

THEME: General satisfaction with content/staff/ facilities/quality of delivery

Q.3) Did you enjoy the programme?

Probe:

- How satisfied were you with the messages and games and ideas shared with you?
- What about the staff involved?
- The space made available to you?

THEME: Situational detail on enriching side of the home learning environment.

Q.4) What impact do you feel the programme has had on you?

Probe:

- Do you feel more confident in supporting your child's learning?
- Are you more motivated to support your child's learning since taking part in the programme?

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex D: Question sheet for post-focus group

Q.5) Since taking part in the programme do you feel that you talk more with you child / your child talks more with you?

Probe:

- What do you talk about?
- How do you think this has impacted on your relationship with you child?
- Do you feel you understand your child more?

Q.6) Since taking part in the programme is there anything you now do differently at home with your child?

Probe: What about (if not mentioned)

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| - Watching TV together | - Reading stories |
| - Making up stories together | - Reading to your child |
| - Listening to your child | - Playing outside |
| - Making up games | - Dancing to music |
| - Playing on the computer/iPad/tablet/phone | - Playing with toys |
| - Playing with friends/siblings | |

Q.7) Do you engage in the activities and tools outlined in the programme?

Probe:

- In what way have you developed/ adapted them to suit your family?
- Which ones does your child enjoy the most?
- How do you feel these support your child's learning

THEME: Situational detail on enriching side of the home learning environment; HLE 'outside' and also linked to social capital.

Q.8) Since taking part in the programme is there anything you now do differently when out with your child?

Probe:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| - Where do you go? | - What activities do you do there? |
| - Who with? | - Do you do different things since taking part in the programme? (e.g weave in 'learning') |

THEME: Situational detail on what parents see as their expectations in engaging in child's learning at home. What do they identify as their role? How much influence do you feel you have over child's motivation to learn?

Q.9) Since taking part in the programme what would you describe as your role in supporting your children's learning?

Probe:

- Has this changed to what it was before the programme began?
- Do you feel more supported to perform this role?
- What other support do you think would help?

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex D: Question sheet for post-focus group

Q.10) Do you feel you making a difference to your child's learning? Any barriers?

Probe: What barriers may there be to you having an influence?

- Don't know what to do
- Things are different to when I was in school
- He/ she doesn't listen to me
- Not a trained teacher
- My child and I always end up fighting
- I get frustrated easily

THEME: Situational detail on parent relationship with school. How does the school communicate with parents – methods and what on? Do you find this helpful? Do you want more information?

Q.11) Since completing Families Connect are you talking more with the school regarding your child's learning?

Probe:

- Who are you talking to?
- Is there anything that you feel has changed in the **way** you communicate with the school since taking part in the programme?

Probe (if not already covered):

- Progress during parents' evening
- What we can be doing at home
- Reading clubs
- How to read with my child
- Areas my child is struggling with and what we can do at home to help them
- Messages about events and clubs
- Homework clubs
- Homework we have to help them with
- A summary each term about what they are doing in the class that term
- Things we can do at home to support my child

Probe: Have you found this helpful?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Kind of

Q.12) Is there anything you feel you would like the school to share more information on?

Probe (if not already covered):

- Progress during parents' evening
- What we can be doing at home
- Reading clubs
- How to read with my child
- Areas my child is struggling with and what we can do at home to help them
- Messages about events and clubs
- Homework clubs
- Homework we have to help them with
- A summary each term about what they are doing in the class that term
- Things we can do at home to support my child

THEME: Situational analysis on social capital and group working/ learning

Q. 13) What has been good about working in a group?

Probe:

- Learn from each other (what was that?)
- Reassurance that it's not 'just me'

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex D: Question sheet for post-focus group

- Share my own ideas and hear others listen
- See other parents regularly
- Get to know other parents

Closure

Is there anything else you think would be useful for us to know? Thank you very much for coming this morning/ afternoon.
Your time is very much appreciated and your comments have been very helpful.

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex E: Children's softer skills, bespoke scale

Annex E: Children's softer skills, bespoke scale

In this section, please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the statements.

	1 Disagree very strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree just a little	4 Agree just a little	5 Agree	6 Agree very strongly
The child is interested in solving problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child wants to learn new things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child can concentrate and work independently.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child seeks help when they don't understand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child deals well with mistakes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child accepts criticism or corrections.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child behaves well in class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child gets on well with their peers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child is proud of their work and achievement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child is generally positive about learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child is adaptive to new tasks and challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The child makes progress in learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex F: Negative performers

Annex F: Negative performers

Negative performers were found across all schools. Higher percentages of negative performers in a school did not seem to mean lower performance on positive-performing peers (which one could expect if teachers were to blame).

Intervention				
School	Number of students involved	Number of negative performers in BPVS (Pre to post programme)	Percent negative performers	Performance of peers in BPVS (Mean peer performance - Mean performance among non-negative performers)
Christian Brothers'	10	0	0	NA
Clapham Manor	13	2	15	4.2
Clovenstone	5	2	40	-2.8
Dysart	8	2	25	-0.5
Gracemount	7	1	14	-0.8
Kingswood	9	1	11	-0.7
Loudoun Montgomery	7	1	14	-1.8
Mayfield	11	3	27	-3.8
St. Bridget's	11	5	45	0.0
St. John's.	6	3	50	-5.8
St. John's RC	12	3	25	2.2
St. Leonard's	10	2	20	-1.8
Telferscot	7	0	0	NA
Windsor Clive	5	2	40	1.7

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex F: Negative performers

Control				
School	Number of students involved	Number of negative performers in BPVS (Pre to post programme)	Percent negative performers	Performance of peers in BPVS (Mean peer performance - Mean performance among non-negative performers)
Christian Brothers'	10	0	0	NA
Clapham Manor	12	5	42	-0.8
Clovenstone	5	1	20	-4.2
Dysart	8	2	25	-2.3
Gracemount	7	1	14	-1.2
Kingswood	9	0	0	-0.1
Loudoun Montgomery	7	1	14	-4.8
Mayfield	13	4	31	-3.8
St. Bridget's	10	2	20	4.7
St. John's	6	2	33	1.2
St. John's RC	11	3	27	5.2
St. Leonard's	10	2	20	-2.5
Telferscot	7	0	0	NA
Windsor Clive	4	2	50	1.2

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex G: Controlling for the control group

Annex G: Controlling for the control group

CONTROLLING FOR THE CONTROL GROUP

Child outcomes – Difference in mean scores between pre- and post-programme

	Participant group			Control group			Difference in improvement (Participant group – control group)	
	Pre	Post	P-value	Pre	Post	P-value	Mean difference in improvement	P-value
Receptive vocabulary (BPVS3)	96.1	99.4	$p<.001$	98.5	99.3	ns	4.1	ns
Softer skills	54	57.3	$p<.001$	56.7	57.1	ns	2.9	$p<.001$
<i>Behaviour</i>								
<i>Teacher report SDQ</i>								
Total difficulties	8.1	7	$p<.05$	6.6	6	ns	-0.5	ns
Conduct problems	0.6	0.8	ns	0.7	0.6	ns	-0.1	ns
Emotional	1.7	1.6	ns	1.2	1.1	ns	0	ns
Hyperactivity/inattention	4.1	3.8	ns	3.5	3.5	ns	-0.2	ns
Peer relationship problems	1.7	1.2	$p<.001$	1.2	0.9	$p<.05$	-0.2	ns
Pro-social behaviour	6.7	7.4	$p<.001$	7.5	7.5	ns	0.7	$p<.05$
<i>Parent report SDQ</i>								
Total difficulties	9.3	8.8	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct problems	1.4	1.1	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Emotional	2.2	2.0	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Hyperactivity/inattention	4.3	4	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Peer relationship problems	1.4	1.4	ns	-	-	-	-	-
Pro-social behaviour	8	8.3	$p<.05$	-	-	-	-	-

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex G: Controlling for the control group

Child outcomes difference in mean scores between pre and three-month follow-up

	Participant group			Control group			Difference in improvement (Participant group – control group)	
	Pre	3mnth	P-value	Pre	3mnth	P-value	Mean difference in improvement	P-value
Receptive vocabulary (BPVS3)	95.7	98.3	$p<.05$	97.2	98.9	ns	6.1	ns
Softer skills Behaviour	51.8	55.1	$p<.01$	55.8	58.4	$p<0.05$	0.8	ns
Teacher report SDQ								
Total difficulties	9.4	8.2	ns	6.7	5.3	$p<0.5$	0.3	ns
Conduct problems	1	0.9	ns	0.9	0.5	$p<0.5$	0.2	ns
Emotional	1.8	1.6	ns	0.9	0.9	ns	-0.1	ns
Hyperactivity/inattention	4.8	4.2	$p<.05$	3.9	3.1	$p<.01$	0.3	ns
Peer relationship problems	2.2	1.8	ns	1.2	0.9	ns	-0.1	ns
Pro-social behaviour	6.4	6.8	ns	7.1	7.4	ns	0.1	ns
Parent report SDQ								
Total difficulties	10	8	ns	-	-	-		
Conduct problems	1.4	0.9	ns	-	-	-		
Emotional	2.1	1.8	ns	-	-	-		
Hyperactivity/inattention	4.3	3.5	ns	-	-	-		
Peer relationship problems	1.8	1.6	ns	-	-	-		
Pro-social behaviour	8.1	8.7	$p<.05$	-	-	-		

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex H: Delivery models

Annex H: Delivery models

Workshop structure

Families Connect is for parents and carers with at least one child who is aged between 4–6 years old. We typically advise working with a group of 10 families at one time. A Families Connect workshop can be run at any point during the school day, before or even after it. Each Families Connect workshop will follow the same format to ensure consistency between each of the modules. Here is an example of the different elements within a Families Connect workshop:

Time	Activity
0.00	Family Snack A light snack is prepared in advanced. Parents and carers sit down with their children to eat and discuss a talk topic such as “If you were an animal, what would you be and why?”
0.20	Parents’ Reflection Time Children go to a separate supervised play time provided by the school or mobile crèche. Parents and carers discuss the previous week’s takeaway and any new learning in a group.
0.40	The Science Bit Introduction of the session, including the main aims and a simple message about the week’s topic. This section includes the reasoning why the topic is included and its importance to children’s learning as an introduction to the activities or messages that parents can take away. Parents are encouraged to share their experiences, successes and challenges of addressing the topic.
1.00	Trying it out Out Demonstration of the activity to parents with an opportunity for them to model and practice with each other before the children return. This approach is intended to build parent’s confidence in conducting the activities themselves as well as ownership over the learning contained.
1.25	Doing it Together Children return and the parents and carers carry out the activity with their child. Facilitators are on-hand, but parents are encouraged to lead interactions.
1.45	Closing Activity and Reward A group activity to celebrate the achievements of the session and reward stickers for the children.
2.00	Finish

In-house delivery

How can schools be involved?

Save the Children is currently looking for schools to deliver the Families Connect programme. These cycles will be delivered by a Save the Children Trainer alongside a member of your school team. We are also looking for staff from Primary Schools to participate in a Training of Trainers course in 2017 with a view of delivering the programme in their respective schools.

What does the programme involve?

The programme consists of eight, weekly, 2-hour workshops held within the school, with timings flexible dependent on what suits the school, for example, during school hours, after school hours or straddling the end of the day (an hour before the end of school and an hour after school has finished).

The testing will be co-delivered by Save the Children trainers and by a member of your school staff team. In this test we will be evaluating the outcomes of the programme. This will then be used to feed back into the remaining design of the programme.

Will the Families Connect Test cost us anything to run?

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Annex H: Delivery models

Save the Children are able to offer a trained member of staff to co-deliver the Families connect programme and provide support including a staff briefing to your identified member of school staff who will deliver the programme in your school.

We are also able to provide some of the resources needed to run the weekly sessions. A list of what these are can be separately provided.

There is a small cost associated with delivering a cycle of Families connect, a breakdown of which is included below:

Estimated financial cost to school

Item	Anticipated Cost
Family Snack	£15-20 per week
Session resources	£100 for each test (please refer to resource information sheet as some of these resources may be sourced from existing school kit e.g craft materials)

Staff Time: Please consider staff time to attend training, prepare resources, deliver the sessions and provide childcare where required.

How long will it take us to deliver Families Connect in the school?

The dedicated member of staff will need to commit time to recruit families to take part, which from experience is best done face to face, and will include at least one information coffee morning. They will be briefed by our Save the Children trainers on the content of the programme, which will take approximately one day. The member of staff will need to commit time to coordinating snacks, childcare and resources on a weekly basis once the programme is running. They will be required to co-deliver elements of the programme with the support of the Save the Children trainer, and prepare accordingly. They must be available for the duration of the two-hour eight-week workshops, with each followed by half an hour reflection. They will also need to commit to attending an evaluation meeting (one hour) with us after the completion of the programme.

Community practitioner delivery

Working with Schools and partners

As of Spring 2017, Families Connect will be delivered by offering training to practitioners either working in or with schools to enable them to deliver cycles of the programme to families they work with. We believe this will allow schools and communities to be skilled up to effectively deliver the programme to multiple year groups and reach more families. It will also provide an opportunity for schools to incorporate the outcomes and learning into the school's wider activities. The training includes;

- Practical considerations such as recruitment, retention, set up and programme sustainability
- Exploration of how to approach working with parents
- Experiencing each of the 8 sessions

We are delighted that we are currently able to waiver the cost of the training as an acknowledgment and gift for your participation in the monitoring and evaluation required. We are also able to provide part of the resources needed to complete one cycle of Families Connect with 10 families. We can provide separate guidance as to the remaining resources required. This will be provided on the proviso that Families Connect is delivered at the school in the Summer term 2017.

Save the Children provides the following:

1. 1 x place on our Families Connect delivery training delivered by experienced Save the Children staff
2. 1 x Delivery Manual
3. Ongoing support following the training from Save the Children to include a minimum of one post-training telephone de-brief and a site visit during weeks 2-4
4. Printed resources to part accompany the sessions
5. Individual school report after all monitoring and evaluation is completed, submitted and processed

Commitment required from the school:

1. Completion of partnership agreement with Save the Children

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Annex H: Delivery models

2. Identification of two members of staff (one to be the 'Lead' Facilitator') to deliver a cycle of Families Connect in Summer Term 2017
3. Attendance at the two-day training by the Lead facilitator
4. Delivery of one cycle of the Families Connect programme with 10 families during the Summer term 2017
5. Accommodation of a site visit by Save the Children staff (between weeks 2-4)
6. Completion of all monitoring and evaluation requirements (pre and post questionnaires and a case study)
7. Adherence to and delivery of the mandatory elements of the Families Connect programme, as stipulated in the manual and training
8. Coordination and preparation of all resources (part supplied by Save the Children)
9. Provision of childcare (if deemed necessary) for families taking part in the programme
10. Provision of a 'snack' for families each week

It is expected that you will need to attend refresher training after two years of receiving your initial Families Connect training.

Estimated financial cost to school

Item	Anticipated Cost
Family Snack	£15-20 per week
Session resources	Approx. £100 for each test (please refer to resource information sheet as some of these resources may be sourced from existing school kit e.g craft materials)

Staff Time: Please consider staff time to attend training, prepare resources, deliver the sessions and provide childcare where necessary.

Annex I: Glossary of terms

Reading and understanding the data and information in this report

To increase the ease of legibility and comprehension of this evaluation report for all readers, this report includes several tables complemented by sections that explain the data being presented. The following section explains some of the terms used to describe the findings throughout this report.

Families Connect Completion/retention rates: All participating families who attend at least 6 out of 8 Families Connect sessions are categorised as completing the programme. The retention rate is based on the number of families that complete the programme as a proportion of those that have attended at least one cycle.

Families Connect cycle: The eight-week period Families Connect runs in the school.

Families Connect school: Any school that runs a Families Connect cycle.

Focus group: A group of individuals who are interviewed collectively or participate in a discussion on a focus issue, to provide useful feedback.

Free School Meals percentage (FSM%): The percentage of children on the school roll who are entitled to receive Free School Meals. This is used as an indicator of deprivation within the school.

Special Educational Needs (SEN%): The percentage of children on the school roll who are classified as having Special Education Needs. This can be used as an indicator of disability within a school.

Impact data (Outcome data): This can be derived from the pre- and post-questionnaires completed by both the parents and teachers before and after the Families Connect cycle. This data demonstrates whether there has been any impact on families after taking part in Families Connect.

Standardised instruments: In this evaluation report, there were several standardised instruments used to measure child and family characteristics. A standardised instrument with reputable reliability and validity would have been tested and re-tested. It could also be adapted for different cultural groups, across large sample sizes and easily compared with other instruments being used.

Scales/Subscales: This evaluation report depends on scales within the standardised instruments that are made up of individual items or questions. Scales are known to measure a construct, using a set number of questions, such as family environment. Scales can also be referred to as measures. Moreover, most scales can measure several dimensions of a construct, these are called subscales. For example, the overall family environment can be measured by personal growth, independence and conflict. All three subscales can measure different dimensions of the family environment. Each subscale is also made up of several questions or items.

Reliability and Validity of scales: The scales used in this report have been tested in terms of their reliability and validity. Inter-item reliability refers to the internal consistency of the questions in the scale. Secondly, test-retest reliability is the scales' stability between two specific time points. In general, coefficients of at least 0.70 are known to be of a good reliability. The validity of a scale involves the scales' ability to measure what it is intended to measure. This can be checked against another measure which is meant to measure the same or a similar construct. For example, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire used in this Autumn report is highly correlated with the Child Behaviour Checklist; which is another known child behaviour instrument. Additionally, a valid scale should aim to distinguish between samples.

Demographic data: This includes the basic information about the characteristics of a school's location and the population. Important to Families Connect are Special Educational Needs (SEN%), Free School Meals (FSM%) and geographical location/region, which we collect for all Families Connect cycles. When collecting evaluation data, other information was also gathered about the child, parent and the household/family unit. For example, the ethnicity and age of the target child; the age, marital status and educational attainment of parents; the number of family members and the total household income.

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Annex J: Aggregated 2016 data

Direct reach (broken down into family and child reach): A family/child, are regarded as having been reached when they have attended at least one Families Connect sessions. (This includes other children within the household – for Families Connect child reach).

Indirect reach: based on two class sizes (4-6 year olds) within the school, with the assumption that impact from Families Connect spills over into the classroom environment.

Qualitative data: Qualitative data can be gathered from focus groups, interviews, parent panels, quotes, case studies. Qualitative data is distinguished by traits or attributes that are not numeric.

Thematic analysis: Is a widely used method of analysis in qualitative research. It is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns or themes within data. Themes are patterns across datasets that are important and associated to a specific research question.

Quantitative data: Data that can be counted or expressed numerically, or that can be statistically manipulated. This data can be categorised, or put in rank order, or measured in units of measurements. Quantitative data can be obtained from closed questions, multiple-choice questions and rating scales.

School enrolment or school roll: Number of children currently registered at a school.

Families Connect Population size: All families that attended at least one session of Families Connect in Autumn 2016.

Sample size: Number of respondents in evaluation (at each time point).

Confidence Level: Probability that sample accurately reflects the attitudes and characteristics of the population.

Margin of error: the possible range of values above and below the response you obtain from a given sample.

Intervention group: Group of Children that are taking part in the intervention (Families Connect.)

Control Group: Closely matched sample of Children to the intervention group but are not exposed to the intervention. They are typically used as a benchmark to measure how the other tested subjects do.

N: The symbol, N, indicated the number of valid responses for a question or scale.

Mean: The mean refers to the average of participants' scores for a scale or subscale. When referring to the tables, we want to see whether the mean of the post-programme has increased or decreased since the pre-programme mean, in Families Connect.

Standard Deviation: This measures the amount of variation among scores within a group from the mean value for that same group. Greater variability in scores indicates that scores are more dispersed and that respondents are different.

T-test: The analysis of two population means using statistical examination. It assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other.

Paired t-test: Used to compare two populations' means; each observation in one group is paired with a related observation in the other group.

Statistical significance : Statistical significance tells us the extent to which differences between the pre and post programme values occur by chance. The smaller the significance level, the more certain we are that the change between and pre and post did not happen by chance. For example, a significance level of $p < .01$ means a 1% probability that the changes reported can be explained by chance. In general, statistical significance refers to our ability to make a generalization from our sample to the overall population. This depends on a number of criteria. The generally accepted level of statistical significance appears to be $p < .05$. An explanation of p-values can be found in the table below.

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Annex J: Aggregated 2016 data

P-value (The level of significance)	Confidence Level	Probability of outcome occurring by chance	Language used for describing significance
$p < .001$	99.9%	0.1%	Highly statistically significant
$p < .01$	99%	1.0%	Statistically significant
$p < .05$	95%	5.0%	Statistically significant

P-value: The P-value measures the size of the difference relative to the variation in your sample data. The greater the magnitude of the P-value, the greater the evidence against the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference. Therefore, the closer the P-value is to 0, the more likely there is not a significant difference.

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Annex J: Aggregated 2016 data

Annex J: Aggregated 2016 data

Child outcomes – Difference in mean scores between pre and post programme

	2016 COMBINED		SUMMER		AUTUMN	
	Difference in improvement (Participant group – control group)		Difference in improvement (Participant group – control group)		Difference in improvement (Participant group – control group)	
	Mean difference in improvement	P-value	Mean difference in improvement	P-value	Mean difference in improvement	P-value
Receptive vocabulary (BPVS3)	2.1	$p < .1$	1.9	ns	2.5	$p < .1$
Softer skills	2.7	$p < .05$	2.1	ns	2.9	$p < .05$
<i>Behaviour</i>						
<i>Teacher report SDQ</i>						
Total difficulties	-0.9	$p < .1$	-2	$p < .05$	-0.5	ns
Conduct problems	-0.1	ns	-0.2	ns	-0.1	ns
Emotional	0	ns	0.01	ns	0	ns
Hyperactivity/inattention	-0.4	ns	-0.8	$p < .1$	-0.2	ns
Peer relationship problems	-0.2	ns	-0.3	ns	-0.2	ns
Pro-social behaviour	0.7	$p < .05$	0.7	$p < .1$	0.7	$p < .05$
<i>Parent report SDQ</i>						
Total difficulties	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct problems	-	-	-	-	-	-
Emotional	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hyperactivity/inattention	-	-	-	-	-	-
Peer relationship problems	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pro-social behaviour	-	-	-	-	-	-

FAMILIES CONNECT

Annex J: Aggregated 2016 data

Child outcomes difference in mean scores between pre and three month follow-up

	2016 COMBINED Difference in improvement (Participant group – control group) Mean difference P-value in improvement		SUMMER Difference in improvement (Participant group – control group) Mean difference P-value in improvement		AUTUMN Difference in improvement (Participant group – control group) Mean difference P-value difference in improvement	
Receptive vocabulary (BPVS3)	1.7	ns	3.3	<i>p</i> =0.1	0.9	ns
Softer skills	1.2	ns	1.8	ns	0.8	ns
<i>Behaviour</i>						
<i>Teacher report SDQ</i>						
Total difficulties	0	ns	-0.5	ns	0.3	ns
Conduct problems	0.1	ns	0	ns	0.2	ns
Emotional	-0.2	ns	-0.4	ns	-0.1	ns
Hyperactivity/inattention	0.1	ns	-0.2	ns	0.3	ns
Peer relationship problems	-0.2	ns	-0.4	ns	-0.1	ns
Pro-social behaviour	-0.3	ns	-0.9	ns	0.1	ns
<i>Parent report SDQ</i>						
Total difficulties	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct problems	-	-	-	-	-	-
Emotional	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hyperactivity/inattention	-	-	-	-	-	-
Peer relationship problems	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pro-social behaviour	-	-	-	-	-	-