



Education  
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Foundation

# **Families and Schools Together (FAST)**

## **Evaluation report and executive summary**

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## Contents

<b>Executive summary.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Methods .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Impact evaluation .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Process evaluation.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Appendix A: EEF cost rating .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Appendix B: Security classification of trial findings.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Appendix C: FAST Logic Model .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Appendix D: School agreement .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Appendix E: Project and Participant Information Sheets .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Appendix F: Parent consent letters .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Appendix G: Randomisation Syntax .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Appendix H: Process evaluation data collection overview .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Appendix I: SCUK Grant Information .....</b>	<b>104</b>

## Executive summary

### The project

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is a parental engagement programme which aims to support parenting and enhance links between families, school and the community. Groups of parents and their children (usually around 5–8 families in each group) attend eight weekly 2.5-hour group sessions after school, delivered by trained local partners. Families then continue to meet on a more informal basis for up to 22 months, a period known as FASTworks. Sessions are designed to encourage good home routines around mealtimes, bedtimes and homework with the intention that this will improve the behaviour of the attending pupils, freeing up the teacher to focus on learning to the benefit of the whole class. Save the Children U.K. (SCUK) delivers FAST in U.K. primary schools.

This school-level randomised controlled trial focused on pupils in Year 1 and measured the impact of FAST for the whole year group on Key Stage 1 (KS1) attainment, as well as on children's behavioural and prosocial outcomes measured using Goodman's (1997) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). One hundred and fifty eight schools took part in the trial with a total of 7,207 Year 1 pupils involved at the start of the trial; and 632 Year 1 pupils taking part in the eight-week programme. A process evaluation explored the views of school leaders, school FAST co-ordinators, teachers, pupils, parents, and FAST partners through case studies and telephone interviews. The trial ran between April 2015 and September 2017.

#### Key conclusions

1. There was no evidence that FAST had an impact on Key Stage 1 outcomes for the whole year group.
2. There was also no evidence that FAST had an impact on Key Stage 1 outcomes for the FAST 'target' pupils' (the children whose families signed up to the eight-week programme).
3. Year 1 pupils in the FAST schools had a higher average prosocial score and a lower average total difficulties score than pupils in control schools in the period immediately after the eight-week programme. By the end of Year 2, these effects had waned.
4. Schools generally engaged positively with the FAST programme and felt well prepared to deliver FAST. However, they found that recruiting local partners was a challenge, particularly community partners, due to the time commitments required. Recruitment of families was most successful where schools engaged more active parents as advocates to help encourage others to join. Schools and partners wanted better information on programme requirements and wanted the training (which was generally highly regarded) to include more time for practice sessions.
5. The self-reported capacity for schools and parents to engage was enhanced both in the immediate and longer-term for the FAST parents. However, the success of maintaining the parent group (through FASTworks) or benefiting parents and children in the wider year group was more limited.

### EEF security rating

These findings have a moderate to high security rating. This was an effectiveness trial, which tested whether the intervention worked under everyday conditions in a large number of schools. The trial was a well-designed randomised controlled trial and was well-powered. However, forty-one percent of the pupils who started the trial were not included in the final analysis, mainly due to not providing KS1 test data for the primary outcome. A greater proportion of intervention than control schools dropped out of providing data, and analysis suggests that a disproportionate number of lower performing schools did not provide data. Additional analysis of the results of KS1 assessments in the form of age-related expectations (AREs) available from the NPD was carried out (in which only 6% of pupils were not included): this analysis also showed no effect of the intervention and gives us additional confidence in the security of the findings.

## Additional findings

The programme aims for the social and behavioural skills covered in group sessions to translate to better classroom behaviour for participants and better academic outcomes for the wider year group. This evaluation, however, found no evidence that FAST had an impact on overall KS1 outcomes in intervention schools. It is possible that the large amount of missing data in this trial may have affected these results. However, a model to impute results for missing cases, and a model using the results of KS1 assessments in the form of combined AREs for reading and maths (in which only 5.9% of pupil-level data was missing) both found no evidence of a difference between the intervention and control groups. There was also no evidence that FAST had an impact on the academic outcomes of the children who attended sessions, and further analysis found no relationship between the participation rates (the number of sessions attended) and attainment. These results are consistent with the views of teachers in intervention schools, who reported that they had not observed that the intervention led to any improvements to teaching and learning in the classroom.


FAST showed more promise in improving non-academic outcomes. Immediately after the eight-week programme, there were positive outcomes for Year 1 as a whole. Scores on the SDQ for 'Total difficulties' (representing the risk of mental health disorders) were lower, and prosocial behaviour (positive behaviour and interactions such as helping and comforting others, sharing and cooperation) was higher, across intervention schools than in control schools. This is remarkable given that FAST was only delivered to 18% of Year 1 families. However, the same analysis also suggests that the beneficial effects of the intervention weakened for total difficulties by the end of Year 2, and reversed for prosocial behaviour (that is, pupils in the control group had more positive prosocial scores at the end of Year 2). FAST parents identified improved relationships between themselves and their children, and gave examples of better behaviour in some cases.

Sixteen schools cancelled the programme due to the high commitments required. Most of the remaining FAST schools thoroughly engaged with FAST and headteachers and teachers commented that the programme had benefited their capacity for parental engagement. Attendance of the FAST sessions was good—83% of Year 1 families attended six or more sessions. Schools reported that identifying some parents as advocates for FAST, to encourage other parents to join, increased attendance. Implementation of FASTworks, the continued informal meetings for parents after the completion of the main sessions, was limited. Any future roll-out of FAST should strengthen this element of the programme.

## Cost

The average cost to schools in this evaluation was £1,993 per school. This works out at a cost of £48 per pupil per year averaged over three years, or £133 per target pupil per year averaged over three years. These costs are typically covered by a grant from SCUK and do not include the administrative costs of running the training. Schools estimated that, on average, 48 additional staff hours were required for running FAST, in addition to the eight 2.5-hour sessions run by staff.

**Table 1: Summary of impact on primary outcome**

Outcome/ Group	Effect size (95% confidence Interval)	Estimated months' progress	No. of pupils	P value	EEF security rating	EEF cost rating
<b>KS1: Reading and Arithmetic</b>	0.01 (-0.13, 0.14)	0	4221	0.94		£ £ £ £ £
<b>KS1: Reading and Arithmetic (everFSM)</b>	-0.01 (-0.18, 0.15)	0	1494	0.87	N/A	£ £ £ £ £

## Introduction

### Intervention

#### Why FAST?—its aims and theory of change

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is a parental engagement programme that has been run in a number of countries over the last 25 years. The programme was developed in the U.S.A. by Professor Lynn MacDonald in 1988. Families attend eight weekly sessions after school, where children and parents take part in structured activities together. The programme aims to support parenting and improve children's behaviour—and potentially their learning and attainment. It also aims to enhance links between families, school and the community. Furthermore, one of the theories that underpins FAST posits that improvements in children and families' behaviour, relationships and social capital are thought to spill over into the wider school environment beyond those children and families taking part in the programme (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; McCubbin and Patterson, 1983; Minuchin, 1985).

Save the Children UK's (SCUK) working logic model for FAST outlines three outcome areas: (1) success at school (including child's behaviour and parental engagement with their child's school and learning), (2) strengthened families (including family cohesion, relationships and parents becoming the primary prevention agents for their children), and (3) community cohesion (including reciprocal support between parents, increased links with appropriate community services, and empowering parents in their everyday life). An overview of the U.S. logic model for FAST is provided in Appendix C.

This effectiveness randomised controlled trial (RCT) focused on the first of these theory areas—children's behaviour and their learning and attainment. In line with the theory of change, the RCT focused on these at whole year group level, that is, exploring social, behavioural, and attainment outcomes for whole year groups in FAST participating schools. In addition, the trial explored the attainment outcomes for the FAST children themselves using pupils from the control group as a comparison in a quasi-experimental design (that is, not based on randomisation). This is discussed in further detail in the Design section of this report.

#### What is FAST?

The FAST programme has three phases. The three phases make up one cycle of FAST.

- Phase 1 involves setting up the programme. Schools join the programme and identify a member of staff to be the school FAST co-ordinator for the duration of the programme (usually someone with responsibility for family liaison, and the main point of contact for SCUK). Schools then recruit local partners (see below) and training is provided at each school by an accredited trainer from SCUK (note, trainers are accredited by Middlesex University). Schools then recruit families to the programme.
- Phase 2 comprises eight weekly 2.5-hour group sessions for parents and children delivered by the trained local partners. It includes pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires required by Middlesex University's license agreement (see below). (Note, these are the full teacher- and parent-completed Goodman's (1997) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs), completed for each child taking part in FAST.)
- Phase 3 includes a post-eight-week reflection and feedback session.

Families can then continue to meet on a more informal basis for up to 22 months—a period known as FASTworks.

## Who are the recipients?

Usually, children from Reception to Year 2 (for the purposes of this report, known as the 'FAST child'<sup>1</sup>) take part in FAST with SCUK. Whilst FAST is a universal programme, open to all families with children in these year groups, there may be some informal targeting of specific families that the school may feel would benefit from FAST. Each school taking part in FAST delivers FAST to groups of families known as Hubs. The school FAST co-ordinator ensures that each Hub has about 8–12 families and a minimum of four delivery partners (see below). Schools are expected to deliver to more than one Hub in a cycle of FAST (in order to meet FAST license requirements), and up to 40 families can take part in any one cycle.

For this trial, schools with greater than 20% Free School Meals (FSM) status were targeted, in order to include disadvantaged groups in the trial. Families with children in Year 1 were targeted in order that Key Stage 1 assessments could be used as the primary outcome measure. Where insufficient Year 1 families were recruited, the programme invited Reception and Year 2 families to take part in order that Hubs could run (see section on Fidelity). Note, the whole family attends FAST, including siblings of the FAST child. In each family, just one child takes part as the FAST child and is involved in activities such as Special Play (see below). Siblings take part in the family activities and Kids' Time, but do not take part in certain activities that focus on the FAST child only (such as Special Play, see below).

## Who delivers FAST?

Save the Children UK (SCUK) delivers FAST in U.K. primary schools via a license agreement held by Middlesex University and the FAST programme in the U.S.A. FAST sessions are delivered by a number of partners drawn from school staff, parents and the local community. Each Hub requires a minimum of four partners, ideally made up of a minimum of one school partner, a minimum of one parent partner (ideally two or three), and a minimum of one community partner (ideally two) to run (see section on Fidelity). School partners are generally school senior leaders, teachers or support staff. Parent partners can include any parent of a child at the school, but typically parents already engaged in school life get involved in this role. Community partners typically include local voluntary and statutory agency representatives and community members, for example youth workers and faith group representatives. All partners are required to sign up to, and promote, FAST's core values and to attend all the training, delivery and follow-up/review sessions. The ten FAST core values focus on parent empowerment and promoting positive behaviour, and are set out in the box below.

### FAST core values

Parents are capable of being the primary teachers and nurturers for their own children.

Families are central and critical to children's educational performance.

Stress and social isolation diminish parental effectiveness; social support increases parental effectiveness.

Trusting relationships support the ability of families to access helping resources.

Policies and practices of organizations should always support and include parents to enhance the parent child relationship, rather than undercut or isolate the parent from his/her child.

Schools should be welcoming to all families.

Alcohol and drug abuse keeps families from succeeding; prevention, intervention and treatment of the problems of drug misuse increases the family's ability to succeed.

<sup>1</sup> The manual does not refer to the child that takes part in FAST as the FAST child, but refers to them as the child that takes part in Special Play (see Activity Table). For pragmatic reasons, it was helpful for SCUK to refer to the child taking part in FAST as the FAST child to distinguish from their siblings; and this also helped in the RCT to distinguish between the group of children who took part in the FAST programme and the whole year group.



**FAST core values**

Collaboration across systems to address the needs of all children is a necessary and important process.

Poverty, racism, and sexism adversely affect children in their development.

All parents love their children and want a better life for them.

**What does the FAST training involve?**

Training to deliver FAST takes place over two days prior to commencement of the eight-week programme and is delivered by SCUK FAST trainers, or FAST freelance trainers, who have been accredited by Middlesex University. On the first day, the trainer provides an ice breaker activity to facilitate introductions between the parent, school and community partners. These roles are then explained along with the FAST core values. The trainer then spends time providing an overview of the FAST programme and the scientific theories upon which it is based. The trainee partners are then introduced to the FAST activities (as set out in section What does FAST entail?), and during the afternoon of the first training day they begin to practise their roles in each of these activities. On the second day, the attendees practise any FAST activities that they did not cover in day one. The training then focuses on the schedule of the FAST programme including which activities are covered when and what happens on various weeks of the programme. The trainer then spends time discussing safeguarding and recruitment and retention to the programme. Following this, attendees learn about the required evaluation of the FAST programme (including the parent and teacher questionnaires which include the SDQs, and other evaluation and monitoring required at the beginning and end of the eight-week programme under the Middlesex University license agreement to run FAST in the U.K.) and the FASTworks phase of the programme. At the end of the two days, the attendees are ready to begin their FAST delivery roles as FAST local partners.

SCUK assigns each school a FAST trainer. The trainer delivers the training, and supports the school with partner and family recruitment (Phase 1). They attend FAST sessions during weeks one, three, and eight in a quality assurance role and to provide support where needed. They also hold a three-hour review session after week eight with the site's FAST delivery team (Phase 2). About a month after the eight-week programme, the trainer leads a session to gain feedback from parents and staff, and share their programme cycle evaluation report put together by Middlesex University (Phase 3). Note, accredited FAST trainers do not deliver the sessions—the trained local partners deliver the sessions.

**What activities are involved in the 8-week FAST programme?**

Parents and their children attend highly structured 2.5-hour group sessions taking place at the end of the school day in classrooms and other locations in the school. This is known as 'Phase 2'. Each week follows the same format and involves the elements set out below. Materials used for the sessions include paper and pens, cardboard, photos, and emotional charade cards.

Activity	Purpose	Who is involved
<b>Welcome FAST Families and FAST Hello</b>	Builds social status.	Whole family
<b>Flag/shield or Family symbol</b>	Visually creates a sense of family unity and social status (families create their own flag using coloured cardboard and drawings or photos of themselves).	Whole family

Activity	Purpose	Who is involved
<b>Family Meal</b>	Families take turns to provide a meal for the whole group—exchange of cuisine.	All—in each family their child/children serve(s) the adults
<b>Family games</b>	Creates positive social connections and interactions.	Whole family
<b>Singing</b>	Exercise and movement.	Whole family
<b>Buddy time</b>	A chance for parents to be listened to without interruption (FAST and other children in another room).	Parents only
<b>Parent group</b>	Develops social networks, all voices can be respectfully heard and topics are chosen by parent participants (FAST and other children in another room).	Parents only
<b>Children's/Kids' time</b>	Exercise and social connections (FAST and other children in another room).	Children only (i.e. FAST children and their siblings)
<b>Special Play</b>	Builds parent-child bond—the FAST child has a turn to lead and 'be the boss'.	Parent(s) and their FAST child
<b>Table-based communication</b>	<b>Local partners</b> provide warm and supportive social connections.	Whole family
<b>Win family hamper / door prize</b>	An opportunity to win as a family. This is a random draw without replacement so every family wins once.	One family each week
<b>Announcements</b>	Family news is celebrated.	Whole family
<b>Closing circle and 'rain'</b>	Regular signal for closing. The 'rain' activity involves the whole group standing in a circle and performing actions that make sounds like rain such as finger snapping, hand rubbing, thigh patting, and feet stomping.	Whole family

Families completing six of the eight sessions (75%) 'graduate' and receive certificates during the last session. The SCUK trainer then visits the school to review FAST immediately after the programme. Following this, the trainer visits the school to gain feedback from parents on FAST and share with them their evaluation report put together by Middlesex University. Parents may then continue to meet on a regular basis (for example, monthly) for two years (22 months) after the initial eight-week programme. This aspect of the programme (known as FASTworks) is less formalised and varies in nature and content according to how the parent group or Hub wishes to continue.

### Issues in this RCT

A number of issues arose during the implementation of FAST in this RCT that are discussed in the results section and the sections on Fidelity and Limitations. These include:

- 20% of intervention schools cancelled (withdrew from) the programme for reasons including being unable to commit to the requirements;

- a shortened Phase 1 set-up period in most schools in order to accommodate trial baseline and randomisation requirements which may have affected schools' abilities to recruit partners and families; and
- limited fidelity in terms of implementing and participating in FASTworks.

In addition, issues relating to the FAST evaluation arose, including:

- the number of Year 1 families recruited within schools was lower than expected, which may have increased the 'dilution effect' and hence may have weakened the potential to detect an effect; and
- low primary outcome data collection with 27% school-level attrition at follow-up (see section on Participant flow including losses and exclusions).

## Background evidence

There is considerable evidence that FAST can improve social and behavioural outcomes for children and their families. The FAST programme has a built-in evaluation element where, using standardised questionnaire measures, children's social, emotional and behavioural development—alongside parental engagement and family relationships—is assessed before and after the intervention. These standardised questionnaires include the Family Environment Scale (Moos and Moos, 1981), the Social Relationships Questionnaire (McDonald and Moberg, 2002), the Self-Efficacy Scale (Coleman and Karraker, 2000; Sherer *et al.*, 1982), the Parental Involvement in Education Scale (Epstein and Salinas, 1993), the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997), the Substance Use Questionnaire (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention Government Performance and Results Act [CSAP GPRA], 2005), the Social Support Instrument (Sherbourne and Stewart, 1991), and Reciprocal Support with Other Parents (McDonald and Moberg, 2002). Thus, each time the programme is implemented more data is produced to measure its effectiveness. Although there is potential for bias in the self-reports from families and teachers using such instruments, the SDQ shows good concurrent validity with other measures of the same concepts (Muris, Meesters and van den Berg, 2003) and reasonable internal consistency (Goodman, 2001) and is widely recognised as a useful instrument. In the U.K., the founder of FAST, Dr. Lynn Macdonald, leads the evaluation of the programme through Middlesex University; in the United States, data is submitted to the FAST National Training and Evaluation Centre for analysis and publication.

Studies from the U.S. show a reduction in self-reported family stress, enhanced family relationships, decreased difficulties in school (Ackley and Cullen, 2010), and improvements for clinical symptoms such as reductions in conduct disorder, anxiety, and improvements in attention following the FAST intervention (Macdonald *et al.*, 1997). Crozier *et al.* (2010) have performed an analysis on data aggregated across multiple sites and found significant gains for FAST participants on self-reported family functioning, enhanced family relationships, parental self-efficacy, and social connectedness—as well as improvements in the children's behaviour—as assessed following completion of the intervention compared to their own scores pre-intervention. It is worth noting that one of the early goals of the FAST programme included a focus on family cohesion and involved delivery partners in mental health and substance misuse rather than general community partners. The early literature tends to have focused on family relationships and family cohesion.

In addition to this evidence, several randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in the U.S. have been conducted on FAST. Layzer *et al.* (2001) explored the effectiveness of FAST among low-income, at-risk, urban African-American families and found significant improvements in teachers' and families' reports of the FAST children's behaviour and social skills, and decreases in aggression at one-year follow-up compared to control children. The overall effect size of the intervention was 0.26. Macdonald *et al.* (2006) similarly showed that following the intervention there is an improvement in reported classroom behaviours including reduced aggression and improved social skills. They found an overall

effect size of 0.25. Kratochwill *et al.* (2009) demonstrated reductions in reports of children's aggressive behaviour ( $d = 0.68$ ), fewer special educational needs referrals, and families performing better on a family adaptability measure ( $d = 1.35$ ) for the participants in the FAST group compared to controls. Knox *et al.* (2011) studied the effectiveness of FAST in immigrant Latino (mostly Mexican) families in the U.S. They failed to find any differences between the children in the FAST and control groups in the amount of aggressive behaviour, but did find improvements in the FAST children's social problem-solving skills. Parents reported that FAST had improved communication within the family. These RCTs suggest that FAST might be effective in improving children's behaviour, skills, and their family dynamics across several cultural groups.

However, there is limited evidence of any attainment impact of FAST. Only a few RCTs carried out in the U.S. have revealed any effects of FAST on academic ability and these have used teacher-reported questionnaires. Kratochwill *et al.* (2004) evaluated FAST with a sample of 100 Native American elementary school children and their families. At one-year follow-up, they found that the teachers rated the FAST children as more academically competent than the children in the control group using the Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS). In addition to this they found improvement in the behaviours of the FAST children when compared to the non-intervention control group. Macdonald *et al.* (2006) found similar results using the same standardised instruments. At two-year follow-up they found that children in the FAST group were rated more highly on academic performance and classroom behaviours, including aggression and social skills, than children who had been in an active control group. The results demonstrated an effect size of 0.25. Thus there is a need to explore the impact of FAST on academic attainment using more robust measures.

A further issue to be explored is that FAST is a universal programme intended to impact on the whole year group or whole school, but delivered to a sub-set of families and children. Spier and Bos (2015) highlighted the need to investigate both individual-level and school-level treatment effects of FAST, taking into account the effects of dilution and, in their study, low-uptake of FAST.

The EEF Toolkit (2018) contains some encouraging evidence for the effectiveness of parental engagement with pupils' learning more broadly. The EEF summary states 'the association between parental involvement and a child's academic success is well established, but evidence on how to increase parental involvement is mixed'. For example, the studies Mind the Gap (Dorsett *et al.*, 2014) and Parenting Academy (Husain *et al.*, 2016), which both aim to give parents skills to support their children's learning, showed no significant effect on attainment. However, Texting Parents (Miller *et al.*, 2016), which uses text message prompts to update and engage parents, showed that children who received this intervention experienced about one month of additional progress in maths compared to other children. The SPOKES programme (Tracey *et al.*, 2016), which aims to give parents the skills they need to help their children read, has some success with a subgroup revealing that boys had some improvements in their attainment in reading in the longer term.

In addition to the EEF resources, there are some other good summaries of the evidence to date. Vorhis *et al.* (2013) summarised the research conducted over the preceding ten years on the effects of family involvement activities at home and at school on literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional skills for children ages three to eight. They found that, in the majority of studies, family involvement was positively linked (i.e. a correlation, not causal) to children's literacy and math skills. See and Gorard (2015) provided a systematic review of the evidence suggesting that parental involvement is linked to young people's attainment at school. They found 77 reports that were directly about the impact of parental involvement. These confirm that parental involvement and attainment are linked, and in the correct sequence for a causal model. They state that there is promising evidence that intervening to improve parental involvement could be effective.

The latest Social Mobility Policy (DfE, 2017, 'Unlocking Talent: Fulfilling Potential') highlights the importance of parental engagement in learning for young children; it cites research by Melhuish (2010) which states that one of the biggest influences on a child's early development is what happens in the

home. It goes on to say that disadvantaged children in particular are less likely to have the support they need in the home as their parents are less likely to have the right information and tools to support their children's development. Policies to address this include providing funding to identify evidence-based home learning programmes. In 2016, the Public Policy Institute of Wales published a report exploring introducing social and emotional learning into the classroom. In it, Banerjee *et al.* (2016) argue that initiatives such as FAST need to be embedded in school systems and they discuss the challenges of implementing such programmes effectively.

The FAST programme has been delivered by SCUK over a number of years in the U.K., with a scaled-up 'real world' model, and so was evaluated here through an effectiveness trial (that is, real-world at scale). Given the previous evidence that FAST supports children's behaviour and parents' confidence, this NFER study aimed to explore the attainment evidence gap, in other words, to evaluate the impact of FAST on children's learning as the primary outcome. It also aimed to explore both school-level impact and FAST subgroup impact—the former through an RCT and the latter using a quasi-experimental design within the overall RCT experiment.

## Evaluation objectives

The **primary research question** is: What is the impact of FAST on the Year 1<sup>2</sup> children in FAST schools in terms of their attainment at the end of Year 2 measured by Key Stage 1 tests?

The **secondary research question** is: What is the impact of FAST on the Year 1 children in FAST schools by the end of Year 2 in terms of behaviour ('difficulties measures'),<sup>3</sup> prosocial outcomes,<sup>4</sup> and impact measures (as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, SDQ; Goodman, 1997) at a whole-year-group level?<sup>5</sup>

**Sub-group questions include:** Are there any differences in **primary outcome** by FSM-eligibility, randomisation 'block', prior attainment, and baseline SDQ aggregated score?

**On-treatment questions include:** What is the effect on the primary outcome of FAST 'graduation' (or not); and what is the effect on the primary outcome of further 'dosage' through FASTworks?

**The main quasi-experimental question is:** What is the impact of FAST on the children who take part in the eight-week programme (the 'FAST child') in terms of attainment (the primary outcome)?

The **process evaluation** explored the implementation of FAST and how staff, parents, and children engaged with the eight-week programme. In light of the theory of change, it also sought to investigate views at the wider Year 1 level in order to explore any connections between the eight-week programme and perceived impacts for the wider Year 1 group. The process evaluation continued into the following academic year to explore the nature of FASTworks engagement, and how this might be affecting outcomes.

The evaluation objectives are set out in the published protocol:

[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation\\_Protocols/EEF\\_Project\\_Protocol\\_FamiliesAndSchoolsTogether.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation_Protocols/EEF_Project_Protocol_FamiliesAndSchoolsTogether.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Children in the intervention and control schools were in Year 1 in the year of FAST delivery. They were at the end of Year 2 when KS1 assessments and follow-up SDQ administration took place.

<sup>3</sup> There are four 'difficulties measures', which, added together, create a maximum score of 40.

<sup>4</sup> The prosocial score, maximum 10, is reported separately to the difficulties measures.

<sup>5</sup> Further impact questions are also assessed on a ten-point scale. The impact questions cover chronicity, distress, social impairment, and burden to others; an increase in the score corresponds to an increase in the impact of the pupils' behavioural difficulties on themselves, their teachers and their peers.

## Ethical review

This study obtained approval from NFER's Code of Practice Group on 20 August 2015. This study planned to use school-provided Key Stage 1 papers for independent marking, as well as obtain Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs) to match to the Department for Education (DfE) National Pupil Database (NPD) in order to obtain pupil-level EYFS data. The study also used the SDQ, and due to the somewhat sensitive nature of the questions asked in the SDQ, this data was collected anonymously.

Schools opted into the trial by the headteacher (or their designated deputy) signing SCUK's FAST School Agreement. In collaboration with NFER, this was adapted for the purposes of the trial to include a memorandum of understanding (MoU) setting out the trial requirements and was signed by the school, SCUK, and NFER during recruitment. The trial adopted opt-out parental consent across all Year 1s at the start of the trial (for Block 1, this actually took place when the children were at the end of their Reception year). The MoU, participant information sheet, FAST FAQs webpage, and parent letter all contained relevant information about consent and how the trial data and NPD data would be used—in particular, that children's Key Stage 1 data would be used in analysis with DfE NPD EYFS data. It was also made clear that while the EEF and Fischer Family Trust data archives would contain NPD-matched Key Stage 1 data, no individual school, teacher, pupil or parent would be identified in any report arising from this evaluation.

In addition, this trial required information about the families taking part in the FAST programme—namely, which children took part as the 'FAST child' and for how many sessions. This data is collected by SCUK as part of usual practice. Initially, opt-in consent was used in order for SCUK to share this data with NFER for two reasons: (1) as part of the usual practice of opt-in consent obtained by SCUK for data collection requirements for the FAST programme, and (2) the trial also hoped to access FAST programme data held by Middlesex University (teacher and parent pre and post SDQs) in order to inform the trial and have greater information about SDQ outcomes for children. However, we were unable to access Middlesex University data due to data access restrictions—in particular permissions to unlock the pupil ID used by the FAST programme. Hence, in consultation with SCUK, the opt-in consent approach was amended to opt-out during Block 2 as this was the level required for this trial without accessing Middlesex University data, and it reduced some of the administrative burden on trainers and schools to document consent.

Appendix D provides an example of the School Agreement. Appendices D and E contain the project information sheets and parent consent letters for the trial and the QED.

## Project team

The principal investigator was Dr Ben Styles, head of NFER's Education Trials Unit. The day-to-day trial manager was Pippa Lord, Senior Trials Manager in NFER's Centre for Statistics. They were supported by a team of researchers including: Jo Morrison and Dr Joana Andrade (project statisticians), Dr Richard White and Dr Susie Bamford (implementation and process evaluators), Fiona Walker (process evaluation director), and Dave Hereward and Asma Ullah (survey and test operations leads). Researchers from the Centre for Childhood and Family Research (CCFR) at Loughborough University also supported the process evaluation, including Rebecca Brown and Clare Lushey, with additional advisory support from Dr Lisa Holmes.

The FAST programme was overseen by a central team from SCUK. SCUK's regional Programmes Managers and trainers were responsible for recruiting schools to the FAST trial. Training was delivered by SCUK trainers and accredited freelancers in schools. Local partners were then responsible for delivery of the programme, with on- and off-site quality assurance and support provided by SCUK and freelancers. The FAST programme team were:

- Jason Bowden-King, FAST Manager;

- Tracy Orr and Paula Newcombe, Quality Development Advisors;
- Dave Sandford, Lynsey Wilson, and Dannielle Sapsford, M&E team;
- Tina Lavender, Business Development Manager;
- Anna Kettley, Head of England;
- Tanja Loncar and Annie Wilson, Senior Programmes Managers;
- Barton Creeth, Jamie Hilton, Heather Markin, Becca Lawson, Sarah Crosby, Keri Lickfett, Ruth Wood, and Asther Hagos, Programmes Managers;
- Jacqui Shearman, Bhargavi Gaddi, Anna Rahilly, Jamie Creeth, Alpa Lad-O'Connell, Sandra Baxter, Caroline Schofield, and Amy Ark, Trainers;
- Xanthe Dennis, FAST team co-ordinator; and
- Annabelle Neary and Julie Randles. Head of FAST.

NFER was responsible for overseeing the baseline SDQs, randomising schools, overseeing the mid- and end-point SDQ completion, collecting and marking Key Stage 1 assessments, pupil data analysis, and overall reporting. NFER and partners at CCFR were responsible for conducting the implementation and process evaluation and its reporting. SCUK was responsible for monitoring attendance at FAST through a Family Register; and NFER collected information on FASTworks supplemented by SCUK's information on this part of the programme.

The project was supported and guided by EEF staff Eleanor Stringer, Callum Davey, Dr Anneka Dawson and Elena Rosa Brown.

### **Trial registration**

The FAST trial is registered at <https://doi.org/10.1186/ISRCTN53386443>

## Methods

### Trial design

This trial was designed as a whole-school randomised effectiveness trial, with two main arms (intervention and control). It also contained a quasi-experimental pupil-level analysis. These two strands are outlined below.

#### The school-level design

This took account of the theory of change that all children in the year group/key stage may benefit from some of their peers taking part. Indeed, this spill-over effect is intended by the programme, and so is part of the evaluation investigation. The school-level design also takes account of ‘real-world’ recruitment, whereby FAST recruits schools to the programme, not individual parents. Parents are then invited to join the programme by trained parent, school, and community partners, but the programme does not expect all parents in a given year-group to join. Hence, the reasonably large-scale nature of the design is necessary to account for ‘dilution’; participating FAST children and parents are analysed together with the whole of Year 1.

Schools were randomised into two groups: intervention and control. The intervention group received the FAST programme and a grant of £2,800 to cover the costs of the programme (this is a grant that all schools taking part in FAST receive in the real-world and in this trial—the section on Costs has more detail on this grant). The control group did not take part in the FAST programme. These schools received £500 on completion of mid-point SDQ data and £1,000 on provision of Key Stage 1 data and completion of end-point SDQ data (this was reduced to £500 where only Key Stage 1 data was provided).

#### The quasi-experimental design

This element of the design explored how the subgroup of participating FAST children (those whose parents signed up to the eight-week programme) progressed in terms of attainment. This was done by creating a propensity scored matched sub-sample from the control schools to ensure common support—that is, that FAST children can reasonably be compared with comparison children in a statistical model. This matching used NPD data from known individuals where consent was not withdrawn. Further details on how this was conducted can be found in the Analysis section.

### Participant selection

#### Inclusion criteria for schools

To be included in the trial, schools had to be primary schools in England with Key Stage 1 pupils. Schools must not have taken part in FAST in the past. Save the Children UK (SCUK) recruited schools to the trial with greater than 20% of pupils eligible and in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM). Schools came from the state sector and included free schools and academies. Special schools and schools from the private sector were not included. When recruiting schools, SCUK considered achieving a spread of schools by geography and by urban and rural location. In particular, they avoided all schools in the trial being located in one or two areas, or only in the north or south.

#### Recruitment of schools

SCUK recruited schools to the trial via their Programmes Managers. SCUK Programmes Managers are based regionally, and each oversee a number of school-based and community-based SCUK programmes in their region. SCUK held a two-day workshop on the trial including school recruitment for their Programmes Managers. NFER attended a session during the workshop to explain the trial.



Programmes Managers recruited schools to the FAST RCT using their normal recruitment approaches which includes: Programmes Managers and trainers visiting schools to tell them about FAST and engage them in the sign up process; word of mouth promotion via headteachers; speaking at headteacher network meetings; contact with the Head of Children's Services in local authorities and academy chains; and sharing video link and the FAST website. In addition, for recruiting at scale, SCUK hired EdCo to conduct initial phone calls ahead of more in-depth calls and visits from Programmes Managers. The usual FAST School Agreement was adapted to include information about the trial and an MoU setting out the trial requirements signed by SCUK, NFER and the school. To adhere to the evaluation protocol, Programmes Managers:

- recorded schools' expressions of interest in the trial, prior to sign up; and
- shared an agreement with interested schools, which outlined the evaluation activities schools would be required to complete in order to join and take part in the trial, how their children's data would be used, feedback, and incentives.

The recruitment process was intensive and large-scale: SCUK wrote to a longlist of 5,143 eligible schools (those with greater than 20% FSM in the North and South of England that had not participated in FAST before) in early 2015; they received expressions of interest (EOIs) from 575 of these schools (an 11% conversion rate); after contacting and visiting many of these schools, 158 signed up to the trial (a 27% conversion rate from the EOIs; 3% from the longlist). SCUK's recruitment of schools happened in three termly blocks. However, recruitment was also ongoing: if a school expressed an interest in one term but was unable to take part straight away, it was included in a randomisation block for a later start date. The section on Implementation in the Process Evaluation provides details of why schools did/did not sign up to the trial.

SCUK provided lists of recruited schools to NFER at specified time-points via a secure portal; these included school DfE number, school postcode, and a lead contact name and email address for each school. NFER then undertook baseline data collection with schools, prior to randomisation. Schools that completed the relevant baseline data after each recruitment block went forward to randomisation. The baseline data completion included: obtaining parental opt-out consent for use of individual pupils' UPN/name/DoB to match to EYFS NPD data and KS1 assessment data, schools' upload of UPN lists, completion of a baseline school proforma, and a teacher-completed Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) for each Year 1 child.

### **Parents (and FAST 'target' children) joining the programme**

All parents of pupils who were in Year 1 in the academic year 2015/2016 were eligible to take part in the FAST trial. It was intended that FAST be implemented with around 25 families per school (and up to 40) split by the FAST school co-ordinator into Hubs of 8–12 families. The FAST offer is universal and families volunteer to take part, although there can be some element of informal promotion to specific parents to take part (by the trained parent partner or other local partners). This aspect of FAST remained unchanged for the trial.

If randomised to an intervention school, and if invited to join the eight-week cycle, parents completed a consent form as part of normal FAST practice. This included a statement about NFER having access to relevant information from an adapted FAST Family Register, namely their child's name and date of birth as well as the number of sessions attended. Initially, this consent was sought as opt-in, to reflect opt-in consent already being sought as part of the FAST-SCUK-Middlesex University licence for this programme and with the intention of accessing pre and post FAST-Middlesex data to inform the trial. However, data access restrictions meant we were unable to access this data; as a consequence, the consent to share relevant information from the FAST Family Register was amended to opt-out. Parents from all schools had already provided opt-out consent for names, dates of birth and UPNs to be shared with the NFER through the school-level trial. This new data was only for intervention school families to say whether their child attended FAST and how many sessions.

## Outcome measures

At the time of writing the protocol, the constituent parts of the new Key Stage 1 (KS1) assessments were not known. The primary outcome for this trial was hence determined subsequently and in advance of writing the Statistical Analysis Plan (SAP). The sections on KS1 assessments and marking set out the original plans for these assessments and the alterations made to those plans.

The primary outcome entailed a combined sum of Reading Paper 1 at 20 marks and Arithmetic at 25 marks, weighted in order that they each contributed equally. End of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) scores from 2014/2015 were used as a baseline covariate (this data is available from the NPD).

There were a number of secondary outcomes for the trial. These included two attainment outcomes for Reading and Arithmetic separately, namely the raw score in Reading Paper 1 and the raw score in the Arithmetic Paper. Further non-attainment secondary outcomes were from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997), namely school averages for the SDQ total difficulties score, the prosocial behavioural score, and the impact score.

## Key Stage 1 assessment

Key Stage 1 assessments are normally administered by class teachers, marked in raw format, and then moderated within schools as part of usual practice based on knowledge of the child and other formative information, before the results are entered onto the NPD. For the purposes of this trial, NFER planned to collect KS1 test papers by courier from schools to be independently marked in addition to usual teacher marking. As KS1 testing is part of schools' usual practice and is part of statutory requirements, the limitations of not invigilating these tests were balanced with the expense of independently administering tests in up to 160 schools.

Under this design, the risks of bias were slim. For bias to occur, a teacher would have to (advertently or inadvertently) assist a child/children in a FAST school differentially to a child in a control school during a statutory national test. However, we considered this a highly unlikely scenario. Testing took place a whole year or more after the eight-week FAST delivery, most likely with a different class teacher, and hence teachers were unlikely to link conducting this test with the intervention. Key Stage 1 testing is statutory, and we expected schools to follow their normal procedures.

From the information available on the 2017 Key Stage 1 assessments at the time of writing the protocol, it was anticipated that we would create an aggregate score for each pupil from their Reading Paper 1 and Maths Arithmetic paper. As FAST does not lean towards any one area of learning, the trial required an overall measure of children's learning at Key Stage 1. With relevance and budget in mind, two papers were selected: Reading Paper 1 (as all children sit this, whereas Reading Paper 2 is more advanced and children can stop at any time); and Maths Arithmetic (as this assesses learning in the form of knowledge, whereas Maths Reasoning assesses some higher order thinking skills, not necessarily associated with the FAST programme). The writing paper was not selected, as this is purely teacher assessed at Key Stage 1.

## Key Stage 1 marking

Key Stage 1 assessments are currently teacher assessed and moderated, prior to schools/local authorities submitting results to the NPD. To avoid the potential bias in these moderated age-related expectations (AREs) and to obtain raw scores on the tests, independent marking of Key Stage 1 assessments was planned. Originally, it was planned to independently mark Key Stage 1 Reading Paper 1 and Maths Arithmetic assessments for all the Year 1 pupils involved in the trial once they reached the end of Year 2. We originally intended to work with schools to mark independently using an online marking system—which teachers and markers would be able to access 'blind' to avoid any physical marks being made on papers. Where schools would opt to mark their test papers prior to being

independently marked, teachers would be invited to use the online system; and where schools would allow independent markers to use the scripts prior to their own marking, markers would not amend the papers in any way, but use the online mark system.

The process planned in the SAP differed slightly from that specified in the protocol for reasons of efficiency and having spoken to schools in detail about their requirements (for example, schools were not keen on using an online mark system). This resulted in revised requirements:

- schools were asked to courier their original Reading and Arithmetic KS1 scripts to NFER after the period of moderation was complete;
- the Reading scripts were independently re-marked by NFER markers and their scores data captured; the Arithmetic scripts had each answer data captured and these were automatically marked using SPSS syntax; and
- the scripts were returned to the schools.

Despite preparing for this re-marking activity through consultation with internal KS1 assessment experts and dialogue with schools, not all schools provided their scripts for independent marking for a number of reasons. These included: an untimely strike by a couriering company, meaning papers could not be couriered at the start of the planned collection and marking window. Other couriering arrangements were put in place, but the delay and disruption pushed the timetable back and for a small number of schools this meant they did not provide their scripts before the end of term or did not feel confident to courier them. In some schools, changes of staff, particularly senior leaders or headteachers, meant they no longer wished to send their assessments to be included in the trial. In addition, some schools felt NFER might be 'checking up' on them by re-marking their scripts. For these reasons, a proportion of schools decided not to send scripts to us (87 schools (55%) sent scripts for independent marking; 71 schools (45%) did not send papers for independent marking). Note also that the proportion of schools sending their scripts for independent marking was higher in the control group (71%) than the intervention group (40%).

To mitigate against a very low follow-up rate, it was agreed to ask teachers from these schools to send us their test scores directly to avoid them having to send scripts. The subsequent data collection activity continued well into the autumn 2017 (longer than originally planned) with assistance from SCUK and the EEF. Thirty schools sent test scores as an alternative to scripts. Hence, in the event, scores for pupil outcomes used in the analysis were based on either independent marks or teacher provided scores. It was felt that any difference between teacher marking and independent marking would be minimal on Reading Paper 1, and negligible on Maths Arithmetic (where answers are right or wrong); and the benefits of improving attrition rates would outweigh any possible bias or non-independence from teacher scores. Whilst there remained a proportion of schools that did not provide any Key Stage 1 data in any format, where data was provided the majority was independently marked by NFER. Figure 2, Participant Flow, provides further details of the number of schools and pupils' data included in the analysis.

In addition, NFER accessed the results of KS1 assessments in the form of age-related expectations (AREs) from the DfE National Pupil Database (NPD) in order to conduct missing data analysis and further analysis on KS1 outcomes (see Analysis Section).

### **SDQ administration across Year 1 cohort**

The SDQ (Goodman, 1997) was completed by class teachers for Year 1 pupils at baseline (prior to randomisation), after the first eight weeks of FAST (the 'mid-point'), and then in June–July 2017 alongside the end of Year 2 assessments (to aid maximising response rates—the 'end-point'). The completed questionnaires were anonymised before being sent to NFER by each school. This was necessary as NFER deemed the responses to constitute sensitive personal data and therefore

unobtainable without opt-in parental consent. The teacher-completed SDQ is a standard instrument designed specifically to be completed by a child's teacher or other key teaching personnel.

### **FAST Family Register and SDQ programme data**

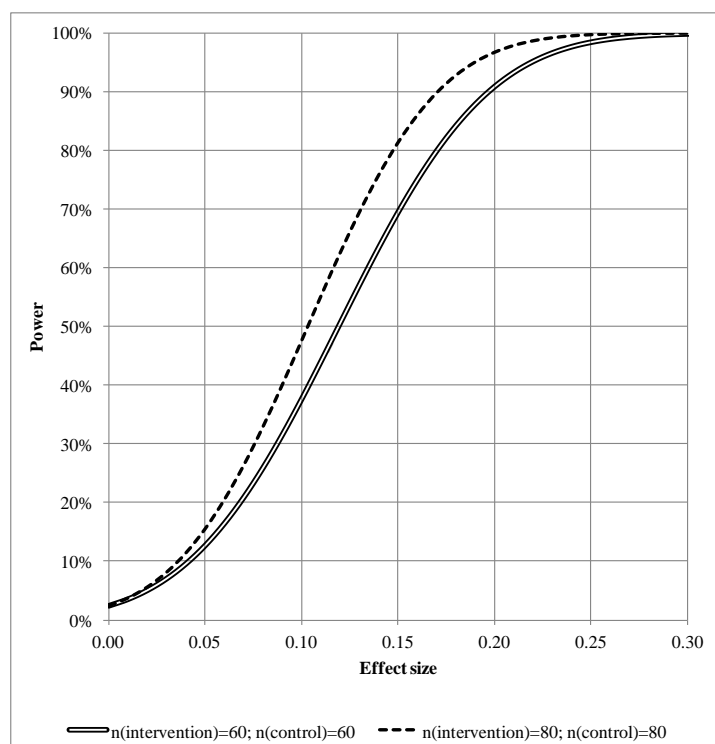
SCUK compile a FAST Family Register for every FAST cycle run in schools in the U.K.—and provide information from this to Middlesex University as part of the license agreement to run FAST in the U.K. Pre and post teacher- and parent-completed SDQ questionnaires are also required as part of this license for every FAST cycle that runs. For the trial, SCUK provided relevant attendance information from the FAST Family Register to NFER, including a list of the target Year 1 pupils by name and date of birth (for which consent was sought). Whilst it was intended for Middlesex University to supply summary SDQ data to NFER on the FAST children themselves, this was not possible due to data access restrictions and data consent concerns (namely, being unable to unlock the pupil IDs used on the FAST programme).

### **Sample size**

As the design incorporates the real-world element of parents being invited to join the intervention itself (within FAST-engaged schools), sample size calculations take account of the dilution of any FAST effect (as not every family in a FAST school will participate). Results of meta-analyses, summarised within the EEF toolkit, identify that the effect size of parental involvement on attainment could be as high as 0.6, although a typical effect size is 0.26 (Jeynes, 2005). If every family in Year 1 volunteered, the trial would be over powered to detect a 'typical' parental involvement intervention of effect size 0.26 with the proposed minimum number of 120 schools (60+60) and a maximum of 160 schools (80+80). However, FAST typically runs with 25 (and up to 40) families (8–12 per hub) in a school and these families are typically from Reception and Year 1. Assuming around 15 families volunteer from Year 1 only this represents around 1/3 of families in an average primary school cohort.

Figure 1<sup>6</sup> shows that with 60+60 schools, this trial is powered to detect an overall (i.e. diluted) effect of 0.17 and with 80+80 schools, the corresponding effect size is 0.15. Assuming the extent of dilution described in the previous paragraph, FAST needs to have an effect of between 0.45 and 0.5 (calculated by dividing the overall effect size by the proportion of pupils that experience FAST) on families that volunteer assuming no spill-over effects on other children (that is, FAST needs to have a large enough effect on the participating 'target' children to be observed across the whole of Year 1).

<sup>6</sup> Assumptions: ICC = 0.16 (from multilevel model of PiE 6 follow-up; EYFS baseline; data from Oxford literacy and numeracy trial) correlation between EYFS baseline and PiE/PiM 6 follow-up = 0.62 (from Oxford literacy and numeracy trial). Expected number of pupils per school for eligible schools (top FSM quintile) = 43.

**Figure 1: Power curves for the minimum and maximum sample size**

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

## Randomisation

Randomisation was carried out by an NFER statistician using a full audit trail in SPSS (see Appendix G for the syntax used). Table 2 describes the blocking and stratification for the randomisation. Within each of six blocks, randomisation took place with one regional stratifier (north/south) to ensure an even split of delivery for operational reasons. In total, 79 schools were randomised to each arm (when combining all blocks). Randomisation occurred after baseline testing. The timetable for randomisation took account of SCUK's FAST recruitment processes and NFER's baseline data collection requirements with schools. Each randomisation took place in the term preceding a delivery cycle. The latest that implementation could start in schools was the summer term 2016. NFER notified schools of the outcome of randomisation and then notified SCUK of the intervention schools.

Mid-point SDQ data was collected at the end of the eight-week delivery point for each school. Some schools were randomised in one block but due to various circumstances they delivered the FAST programme in a later term, therefore their mid-point data was collected at a different time in the year to their counterparts who were randomised in the same block but still at the end of their own eight-week delivery point.

Table 2: Randomisation blocks

Randomisation block	No. of schools in each arm		Total no. of schools
Randomisation for autumn 2015 delivery	FAST	Control	
Early block (1a) North (June 2015)	8	8	48 schools
Early block (1a) South (June 2015)	6	5	
Later block (1b) North (July 2015)	6	6	
Later block (1b) South (July 2015)	4	5	
Randomisation for spring 2016 delivery	FAST	Control	
Early block (2a) North (Nov 2015)	11	11	65 schools
Early block (2a) South (Nov 2015)	13	12	
Later block (2b) North (Dec 2015)	4	3	
Later block (2b) South (Dec 2015)	5	6	
Randomisation for summer 2016 delivery	FAST	Control	
Early block (3a) North (Jan 2016)	7	7	45 schools
Early block (3a) South (Jan 2016)	5	6	
Later block (3b) North (March 2016)	4	5	
Later block (3b) South (March 2016)	6	5	
<b>Total no. of schools</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>158 schools</b>

## Analysis

Analysis followed the SAP<sup>7</sup> and consisted of the following main components:

- multilevel random intercepts model for the ITT analysis of the primary and secondary attainment outcomes (levels: school and pupil);
- missing data analysis for the primary outcome;

<sup>7</sup>[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation\\_Protocols/Round\\_7-\\_FAST\\_SAP.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation_Protocols/Round_7-_FAST_SAP.pdf)

- quasi-experimental analysis (QED);
- Complier Average Causal Effect (CACE) analysis; and
- repeated measures model for the analysis of SDQ data aggregated to the school level.

Analysis deviated from the SAP in the following ways:

- The EYFS covariate could not be calculated using the specified derived variables since they did not exist on the NPD for the baseline year of 2015. Instead, the totals for 'communication, language and literacy' and 'mathematical development' were computed from their constituent measures.
- Randomised block was included as a covariate but identified by the three termly blocks rather than six sub-blocks. This was done to avoid loss of degrees of freedom and because within each termly block the timing of the two randomisations only differed by a small number of weeks.
- When matching control pupils to FAST pupils for the QED, we could not use SEN and EAL data as the data protection status of these variables changed between writing the SAP and doing the analysis, requiring them to have been specifically mentioned in communications with parents.
- The propensity score binomial logit model was single-level, not multilevel as it only consisted of pupils who experienced FAST and control pupils.
- Given the lower than expected recruitment rate of families to the intervention, the suggestion in the SAP to build CACE around a school-level dosage measure to explore the 'halo' effect of FAST was inappropriate. Instead, CACE analysis was run at the pupil level using compliance data from the FAST family register in the form of number of sessions attended.

### **Primary intention-to-treat (ITT) analysis**

The primary analysis was intention-to-treat. A multilevel random intercepts model with two levels (school and pupil) was used for the analysis to account for cluster randomisation. The main analysis determined whether some children in Year 1 attending FAST had an overall effect on the whole class for their Key Stage 1 attainment. This was determined by fitting a model with the dependent variable as Key Stage 1 attainment as measured by the primary outcome described above.

One covariate was prior attainment taken from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) scores from the NPD matched to the pupil lists collected before randomisation. We also included the following covariates: randomised group, randomisation block and region (north/south)—all as dummy indicators. The model was run in R using package 'nlme'.

### **Missing data analysis**

As per the SAP, missing data was explored using a two-level (pupil and school) logistic model of whether a pupil had a KS1 score. The model contained the following covariates: intervention group, randomisation block, region, EYFSP, and everFSM. As seen in the results section, the pattern of missingness prompted the further running of a multilevel multiple imputation model with iterations to reflect the proportion of pupil-level missing data. This model had the advantage of being able to use NPD KS1 reading and maths age related expectations to aid the imputation of KS1 scores. Once the substantive model was run on the multiply imputed data, sensitivity analyses were carried out using different values of delta to reflect a 'missing not at random' scenario (where, as delta increases, the probability of observing a particular variable increases with the value of that variable).

### **KS1 ARE analysis**

In addition to the missing data analysis which used KS1 AREs, an analysis of KS1 AREs as the outcome measure was undertaken. This was not specified in the SAP, and was undertaken in order to obtain a

larger number of cases in the modelling than was possible due to attrition in the primary outcome analysis.

An intention-to-treat analysis approach was also adopted for the KS1 ARE analysis. Three random intercept multilevel ordered logistic regression models with two levels (school and pupil) were fitted to account for cluster randomisation. The models considered the effect of being in the intervention group on children's literacy and numeracy attainment: one of the models evaluated the effect on the combined reading and maths attainment and the remaining two the effect on each individual subject. Taking into consideration that teacher-assessed age related expectation (ARE) categories possess an implicit order, the analyses evaluated if the probability of a pupil being classified in the higher or lower categories changed for intervention group pupils as compared to control. For this purpose the ordered logistic regression multilevel models were fitted with the reading- and maths-ordered categorical ARE variables, or their combination, as dependent variables.

Similarly to the primary intention-to-treat analysis previously described, prior attainment taken from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) scores from the NPD matched to the pupil lists collected before randomisation was included in the models as a covariate. The weighted average of the EYFSP components was a covariate for the combined reading and maths attainment model, the sum of the communication and literacy components for the reading attainment model, and the sum of the mathematics components for the maths attainment model. The following factors were also controlled for and included as dummy indicators: randomised group, randomisation block, and region (north/south). The models were run in R using package 'ordinal'.

## QED

FAST is a universal intervention. Any family with a child in Year 1 was eligible to take part in the eight-week FAST programme. We matched data from the FAST Family Register to the trial UPN list and to the NPD to describe the sample that took part in terms of:

- total number;
- proportion of target children compared with the whole of Year 1;
- gender;
- everFSM; and
- EYFS.

The QED analysis was observational rather than experimental as, whilst we could reasonably expect parents to engage in the programme in similar rates across experimental groups, we would not be able to measure the reasons why they participated and cannot reliably mimic participation in the control group.<sup>8</sup> That said, this approach provided a robust yet unidentified counterfactual in the set of parents who could have engaged had they been randomised to FAST. However, as the parents themselves were not randomised, it should be emphasised that the results are not causal.

Matching of pupils in control schools to FAST pupils was done on the following variables: gender, everFSM, and EYFS. These have been chosen as they may be predictors of FAST participation and are available on the NPD. Our analysis ensured 'common support' through propensity score matching followed by multilevel modelling using the following sequence of steps:

- a binomial logit model of intervention group on the matching variables listed above;
- the removal of anyone in the comparison group with probability lower than 'min' in intervention group

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<sup>8</sup> This scenario is unusual in that there is a robust counterfactual set of parents that would have volunteered had their school been randomised to FAST; we just do not know who they are. In a conventional quasi-experiment, comparison schools selected may themselves be systematically different so such a counterfactual does not exist.



- the removal of anyone in intervention group with probability greater than ‘max’ in comparison group.

A two-level (pupil and school) multilevel model of KS1 was run on the following covariates: EYFS, intervention group, gender, and everFSM. The coefficient of the intervention group variable (and its standard error) was used to calculate a quasi-effect size (and its confidence interval) as detailed below.

### Secondary outcome analyses

For the secondary outcomes, we used the standard scoring system to obtain SDQ results for the difficulties measures, the prosocial score, and the impact measures. We used pre-specified SPSS syntax available from the SDQ website to derive these measures, which were modelled separately.

Due to the anonymity of the data collection, the SDQ could only be linked between time-points at the school level. This therefore means that there is no advantage of modelling at the pupil level. Indeed the most efficient solution is to include both follow-up time-points in a school-level repeated measures model. Each model had two levels,<sup>9</sup> school and time; the first time-point being the first SDQ follow-up and the second being the post-FASTworks follow-up. Covariates included:

- baseline SDQ score (school mean);
- randomised group;
- randomisation block; and
- region.

### Subgroup analyses

The primary outcome model was modified for the following subgroup analyses specified in the protocol: FSM-eligible pupils (we used the everFSM indicator as per the latest EEF guidance), randomisation ‘block’, prior attainment, and baseline SDQ difficulty at school level. These analyses were carried out through the use of interaction terms in the model. A separate model was run for each interaction. Furthermore, a separate primary outcome model was run on just the ever-FSM eligible pupils, as per EEF guidelines.

### *Effect size calculation*

The numerator for the effect size calculation was the coefficient of the intervention group from the multilevel model. All effect sizes were calculated using total variance from a multilevel model, without covariates, as the denominator—equivalent to Hedges’ *g*. We favour calculating outcome standard deviation from a model without covariates as it is more comparable to other trials in a meta-analysis and is more generally meaningful, having not been artificially reduced. Confidence intervals for each effect size were derived by multiplying the standard error of the intervention group model coefficient by 1.96. These were converted to effect size confidence intervals using the same formula as the effect size itself.

## Implementation and process evaluation

### Methods and rationale

The IPE was designed to explore the implementation of the FAST programme with a particular focus on lines of enquiry that would be useful for schools. For example, how to engage parents in the programme, ingredients for successful intermediate, and longer-term outcomes such as enhanced

<sup>9</sup> Note the protocol states the model will be single-level; it is in the sense that it will be run on school means. One way of running a repeated measures model is to introduce a time level thus making the model multilevel.

parent-school engagement, increased social capital and school improvement, and how the FAST programme might make a difference to the whole year group. The IPE was designed to collect data at three levels as follows:

1. **Data collection with all trial schools**—namely, baseline and end-point school-level pro-formas to be completed by a member of each school's senior leadership team or designated FAST contact. The baseline pro-forma collected information about parental engagement and family support interventions schools had or were about to engage with. The end-point pro-forma similarly collected information on any such programmes schools had engaged with during the trial period.
2. **Data collection with all intervention schools**—namely FAST and FASTworks monitoring data to inform fidelity. SCUK provided NFER with data from the FAST Family Register, which SCUK/Middlesex use as part of normal practice to record attendance across the eight-week programme. FASTworks monitoring logs were developed collaboratively between NFER and SCUK with the intention of being completed by a nominated parent-partner or parent lead from each school, to record attendance and activity during the 22 months of FASTworks. However, as discussed in the section on Fidelity, engagement in FASTworks was limited, and by the end of the first year of the study it was clear that parent-leads were either not in place or not completing the logs (despite efforts to provide alternative formats, including paper logs). Hence, FASTworks data was requested from intervention schools via the end-point pro-forma outlined above, relying on the School FAST co-ordinator to provide the information. Cost data was also collected on the end-point pro-forma from intervention schools.
3. **Data collection with a sub-sample of intervention schools, including:**
  - a. **observations of up to three FAST training sessions** (i.e. one per block) to understand the theory of the programme and how it should be implemented in schools;
  - b. **observations of up to three FAST intervention sessions** (i.e. one per block) in weeks four to eight to observe how the programme is delivered;
  - c. **visits to up to nine intervention schools** (i.e. three per block) shortly after the eight-week programme to explore implementation, engagement, strengths and challenges of the programme; in each school, the visit included interviews with local delivery partners and a member of the school leadership team, a family activity to gather parents' and children's views on the programme, a discussion group with parents and where possible individual interviews with parents;
  - d. **follow-up visits to the above schools** in the equivalent term one year later, to explore any lasting perceived outcomes from the programme for the FAST target participants, any spill-over effects within Year 2 classrooms, and experiences of FASTworks. Follow-up visits included interviews with a small number of parents, the FAST co-ordinator and/or a senior leader, and a Year 2 classroom teacher. As FASTworks fidelity was limited (see section on Fidelity), the planned telephone interviews with the parent or local lead for FASTworks in Summer 2017 were instead replaced with additional questions on sustainability and interviews with other classroom teachers (e.g. Year 1 teachers) where possible during these follow-up visits; and
  - e. **short structured telephone interviews with School FAST co-ordinators** in up to 36 intervention schools (i.e. up to 12 per block) shortly after the eight-week programme; these were designed to capture information and views on training and set up, delivery successes and challenges, and intentions for FASTworks.

Sample sizes were selected in order to achieve both breadth (for example school-level views in telephone interviews from about one-third of the intervention schools) and depth (case studies in about one-tenth of the intervention schools). Telephone interviews and case studies were selected so as to cover each block (to reflect term of delivery), geography (so as to cover schools both in the north and south, as well as urban, rural and coastal schools), school size (so as to reflect the number of Hubs) and schools' previous engagement in parental engagement programmes (based on their responses to

the baseline pro-forma). These criteria were chosen in order to select a range of schools from across the whole sample, rather than purely random.

During the course of the trial, it became apparent that trainers and Programmes Managers from SCUK were key to the delivery model (not just local partners). Hence a small number of additional interviews were conducted with a range of SCUK's delivery and strategic personnel, including a trainer, a programmes manager, a Quality Development Advisor and the Head of the FAST programme at SCUK. Weekly phone calls with the FAST Information Officer/lead also informed the IPE evaluation.

Appendix H provides an overview of the actual number of observations, visits and interviews conducted and with whom.

In addition, three workshops were held throughout the programme by SCUK for the SCUK FAST management and delivery team. NFER attended all three, and presented at the first and third. The first was a workshop to find out about the programme, and for NFER to brief SCUK staff on the trial. The second was held at the end of the first year of the programme and covered key learning points from delivery; and NFER presented on next steps for the trial. The third was held during the second year of the trial, and included a review of FAST and end of RCT delivery celebration for SCUK staff. The process evaluation discussion in this report draws on the learning points from these workshops.

### **Sampling strategies**

**Sampling strategies** for the observation and visit schools included selecting by geography (North/South), urban/rural, school size/number of hubs, and amount of previous engagement with family support programmes. Schools were selected so as to cover a range of these criteria across the sub-sample. First and second choices were selected for each case.

### **Fidelity criteria**

**One of the main fidelity criteria** for the FAST programme is whether families 'graduate' (that is, attend six or more of the eight weekly sessions) or not. This was also the main fidelity criteria for the trial, and was specified in the protocol. SCUK collected this data as part of its normal FAST Family Register, adapted with a few extra fields (name and date of birth) for which consent was sought for the trial. In addition to graduation data, this register also records the number of weeks each FAST child attends (0–8 weeks, rather than just graduation or not). This more fine-grained data was therefore specified in the SAP to be used in the CACE analysis.

Other programme fidelity criteria focus on: the make-up of the delivery team, and delivery partner attendance at two-day training in Phase 1; in Phase 2, trainer visits to schools in Weeks 1, 3 and 8, a set of programme activities (structured in the same way each week, and where special play is particularly important for fidelity), and a Graduation Ceremony as part of Week 8; and a review session in Phase 3. A quality checklist covers each Phase of the programme.

Whilst FAST is formally monitored as standard by SCUK as part of the license fulfilment for Middlesex University, FASTworks was not monitored (at the time of the trial). This trial attempted to monitor FASTworks for the first time, and intended to record the number of sessions and nature of activity each family (and therefore FAST child) experienced. As this had not been attempted before, FASTworks fidelity was not pre-specified, except to say that the evaluation would seek to categorise both pupil-level and school-level dosage and nature of activity. During the course of the trial, it became apparent that FASTworks activity was limited and the intended FASTworks monitoring was not being completed because parent leads were not in place. Hence, a school-level measure of FASTworks was used in the trial, namely: Did families 'do' FASTworks or not? Compliance was accorded as: 'families met up during FASTworks regularly over a period of time'. Regularity was judged according to meeting up at certain intervals, for example once a month. The section on Fidelity provides further discussion on FASTworks fidelity.

## Who collected the data?

All interview data was collected by members of the NFER and CCFR research teams. FAST Register data was collated by SCUK using their usual form, adapted with a few extra fields for the trial, with information shared securely with NFER. As it uses their usual form which forms part of usual practice to fulfil the Middlesex license, it is unlikely to be biased. FASTworks data was collected independently by NFER, supplemented by data from an audit of FASTworks activity conducted by SCUK trainers and programmes managers.

The trial and IPE also intended to access Middlesex University's SDQ data for the FAST children in the trial, to inform contextual and baseline information about the target Year 1 children and their parents. However, it was not possible to access this information due to data access restrictions—in particular permissions to unlock the pupil ID used by SCUK and Middlesex University for the FAST programme. Note, pupil IDs collated on the FAST Family Register for the purposes of Middlesex University monitoring were not shared with NFER.

## Costs

Costs information was collected through telephone interviews with 28 FAST School co-ordinators from across the three blocks of FAST intervention schools in case study interviews with local partners, on an end-point pro-forma sent to all intervention schools in June/July 2017, and from SCUK delivery staff.

The telephone and case study interviews asked school FAST co-ordinators and local partners about any additional monetary cost involved in FAST beyond that provided by the SCUK FAST grant which a school receives when taking part in FAST. The grant value is £2,800 per cycle (with food and hamper grants based on an average of 20 families attending but issued pro rata, that is, increased or decreased according to the number of families attending). It is intended to cover food for family meals, family hampers, graduation expenses and general programme expenses such as play materials and cover for school staff. A 'follow-on grant' of £500 to prepare for FASTworks and £500 during FASTworks is available per site where parent groups are set up following the eight-week programme. A copy of this grant can be found in Appendix I. The interviews also asked about any additional staff time schools used beyond what was needed for training or the eight 2.5-hour sessions (for example, preparing time before sessions, follow-up time after sessions).

The pro-forma asked the FAST co-ordinator to provide the following information: total financial spend on the FAST programme, how this broke down into spend in Phase 1 (set-up, recruiting and training partners, recruiting families), Phase 2 (the eight-week programme including graduation), and for the following 22 months known as FASTworks, and whether the costs were covered by the SCUK grant or were incurred by the school as an additional cost. Similarly, co-ordinators were asked for a breakdown of staff time on activities in Phases 1, 2 and 3, and whether they felt the time was part of their usual practice or additional to usual practice.

Twenty of the 79 intervention schools returned the costs pro-forma. Following cleaning, data from only 15 schools was analysed as five cases were excluded due to a lack of data or poor data reporting. Whilst this cost data is only from a minority of schools, we also discussed costs with 28 telephone interviewees and in eight case studies and found similar results in terms of the overall level of cost (see Costs section in the Results section of the report). According to EFF guidelines, all staffing costs were excluded from the analysis, and the mean cost per school was calculated. This value was then divided by the mean number of Year 1 pupils per school supplying cost data to generate cost per pupil per school. This was repeated using the mean number of FAST families (those directly involved in the intervention) per school supplying cost data to yield the cost per FAST family per school (that is, the cost per FAST Year 1 child).

The cost per year over three years was then calculated. Here, any set-up costs related to the intervention were only included in Year 1 while running costs such as buying hampers and arts and crafts equipment were included across all three years. The costs per pupil per school and per FAST family per school for Years 2 and 3 were recalculated. Following this, the cumulative and mean costs per pupil and per FAST family over three years were determined.

Additional analysis calculated the total and mean expenditure for each item that schools reported spending money on (catering, training, resources, and so on). Included in this was the percentage of the total costs different organisations (that is, SCUK or the school) incurred. This was conducted for each phase—Phase 1, set-up and training, Phase 2, the eight-week programme, and FASTworks—as well as for the entire FAST intervention.

Note, all FASTworks costs are included within the first year costs presented here, rather than attempting to spread these costs across 22 months (the real world time period for FASTworks). The rationale for this includes: (1) the different blocks had varying time periods available for FASTworks (from 12 months to 18 months); and (2) from monitoring and interview data we can see that most FASTworks activity occurred soon after the eight-week programme, and hence spending more often occurred within the first year of the programme than in Year 2.

Time data was similarly analysed. After cleaning, only 12 schools provided high quality, detailed data, (that is, eight schools had to be excluded from this analysis). In line with the EFF guidelines, the mean number of hours staff spent on FAST related activities outside of the eight 2.5-hour weekly FAST sessions was calculated. This was produced for the entire intervention as well as for each phase. Additional analysis calculated the total and mean number of hours schools committed to different FAST activities such as recruitment, planning, or graduation. Furthermore, the percentage of time committed within or in addition to normal working hours was calculated. Again, this analysis was produced for each phase as well as for the entire FAST intervention.

## Timeline

Table 3 provides an outline timetable for the FAST RCT. A more detailed timetable is available in the published protocol.

**Table 3: Timeline**

Date	Activity Block 1	Activity Block 2	Activity Block 3
April 2015	Write protocol		
May 2015	Recruitment		
June–July 2015	Baseline data collection		
July 2015	Randomisation	Recruitment	
September 2015	Phase 1 FAST Observe FAST training	Recruitment (ongoing)	
October 2015	Phase 2 FAST (8 weeks)	Baseline data collection	
November 2015	Phase 2 cont'd Programme observations	Randomisation	
December 2015	Phase 2 cont'd Programme observations	Phase 1 FAST Observe FAST training	Recruitment
January 2016	Mid-point SDQs Telephone interviews Case study visits	Phase 2 FAST (8 weeks)	Baseline data collection
February 2016	Collect FAST monitoring data FASTworks starts	Phase 2 cont'd Programme observations	Randomisation

Date	Activity Block 1	Activity Block 2	Activity Block 3
March 2016	FASTworks cont'd	Mid-point SDQs Telephone interviews	Phase 1 FAST
April 2016		Case study visits Collect FAST monitoring data FASTworks starts	Observe FAST training
May 2016		FASTworks cont'd	Phase 2 FAST (8 weeks)
June 2016			Phase 2 cont'd Programme observations
July 2016	Keep in touch communications	Keep in touch communications	Mid-point SDQs Case study visits Telephone interviews Collect FAST monitoring data FASTworks starts
Sep–July 2017	FASTworks continues. Follow-up case study visits to each case study school, in the relevant term one year on		
May 2017	Key Stage 1 testing; SDQ follow-up		
June 2017	Test marking		
July 2017	Collect FASTworks monitoring logs, costs data and end-point school pro-forma		
Sep–Oct 2017	Further period of KS1 test data collection (this was a protocol deviation)		
Nov 2017	Data cleaning		
Dec 2017– Feb 2018	Analysis and reporting		

## Impact evaluation

### Participant flow including losses and exclusions

Figure 2 on the following pages details the participant flow through each stage of the evaluation—for both the whole trial and the QED. As detailed in the participant flow footnotes and in Table 4, school- and pupil-level attrition for the primary outcome occurred for a number of reasons. These included data collection attrition from 28 intervention schools and 14 control schools (these schools did not provide Key Stage 1 data in either paper or score formats). Reasons included: schools being unwilling to send Key Stage 1 scripts for marking (due to reservations about ‘being checked up on’ or sending papers offsite) or upload their teacher scores as an alternative (due to time commitments, and parental consent requirements); change of headteacher and/or other staff in the school meaning that the school was not aware of their involvement in FAST (intervention or control);<sup>10</sup> school staff illness; and some schools finding the FAST programme itself intensive and so felt unable to commit any more time to the evaluation. In addition, in the intervention group, 16 schools ‘cancelled’ the programme—and indeed 14 of these did not provide Key Stage 1 data or withdrew fully from the trial, despite efforts by NFER to keep them on board early on and in the final stages of data collection.

Further pupil-level attrition occurred at data analysis stage as the primary outcome was made up of a combined reading and arithmetic score: for a small number of pupils, only their reading or only their arithmetic score was provided.

As can be seen in the CONSORT flow Figure 2 and in Table 4, overall attrition was considerably higher in the FAST intervention group than in the control group. Note that, as per the protocol, control group schools received £500 on provision of mid-point SDQ data, and a further £1,000 on provision of Key Stage 1 and end-point SDQ data. Due to school challenges with time commitments, it was decided in agreement with SCUK that where control schools were only able to provide Key Stage 1 data at end point (rather than SDQ data as well), they would still receive £500.

**Table 4: Attrition rate from randomisation to primary analysis**

Attrition Rate	FAST intervention	Control	Overall
<b>Schools</b>	35% (28 of 70 schools)	19% (15 of 79 schools)	27% (43 of 158 schools)
<b>Pupils</b>	50% (1746 of 3428 pupils)	33% (1240 of 3725 pupils)	41% (2986 of 7207 pupils)

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

The following notes accompany Figure 2 overleaf.

**N = number of schools; n = number of pupils**

- Of the 79 schools involved in FAST, 61 schools provided ‘FAST child’ data on the FAST Family Register; that is, 16 schools cancelled the programme and hence did not provide any FAST Family Register data. The two remaining schools used incorrect Registers and we were not able to use their FAST child data.
- 632 Year 1 pupils consented to be part of the trial as the ‘FAST child’. Of these, 579 could be linked to the UPN file for the trial; 53 could not be linked to the UPN file for the trial, for example because they had joined the school subsequent to the school providing the UPN list. However, they consented to be part of the trial through the FAST Family Recruitment, and hence a link to the NPD was attempted. Even though some were linked, they were not included in testing and final analysis since there was no equivalent group of controls.

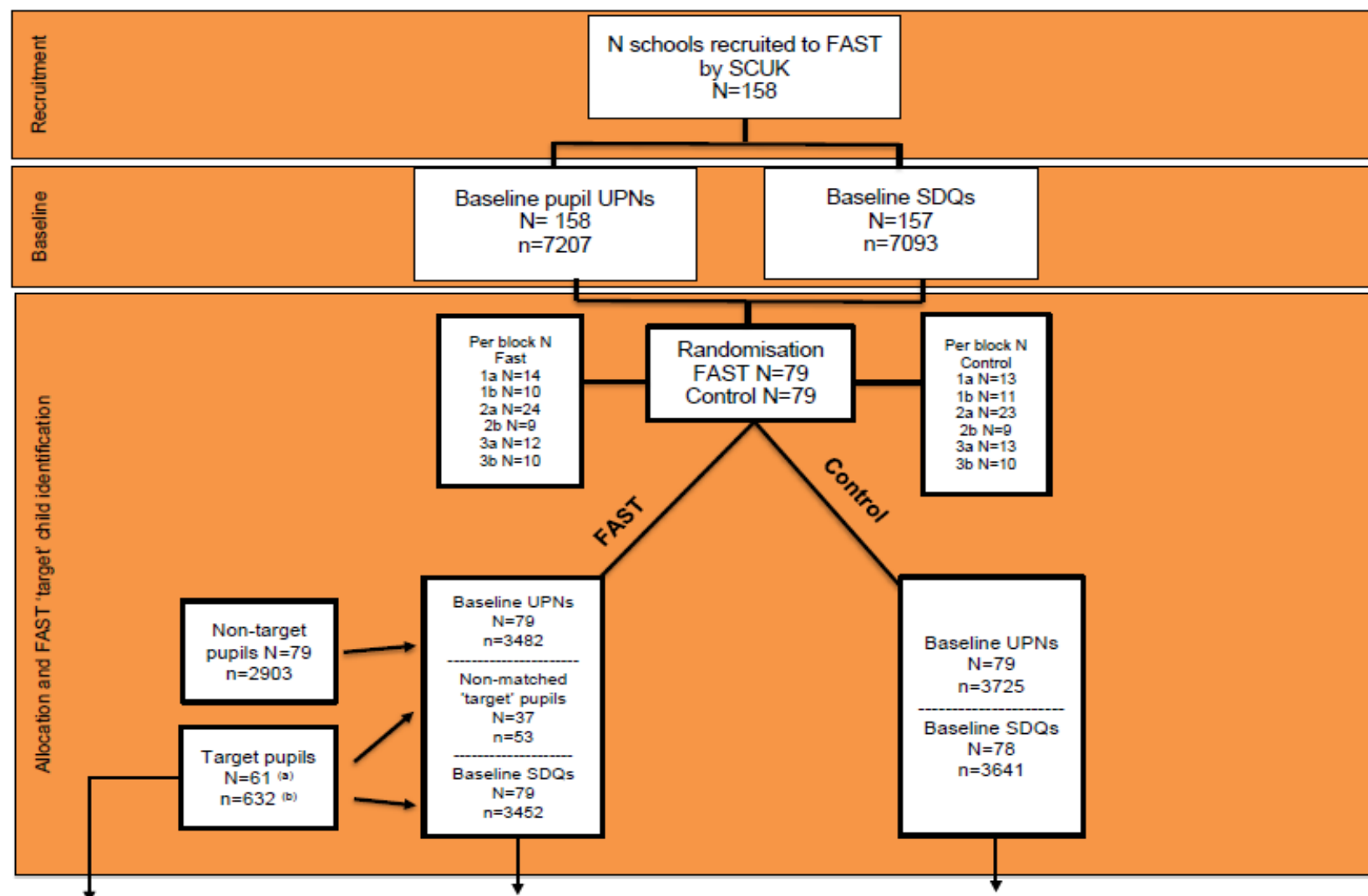
<sup>10</sup> NFER sent keep-in-touch communications to all schools in summer 2016 to update contacts, and again in spring 2017 ahead of data collection.

- (c) n=1017 papers in N=31 schools were marked, while n=775 scores were provided by the teachers of N=20 schools.
- (d) n=1007 papers in N=31 schools were marked, while n=767 scores were provided by the teachers of N=20 schools.
- (e) n=2168 papers in N=55 schools were marked, while n=408 scores were provided by the teachers of N=9 schools.
- (f) n=2170 papers in N=56 schools were marked, while n=405 scores were provided by the teachers of N=9 schools.
- (g) 62 pupils from 23 of the 51 intervention schools that provided papers/scores did not have data from both Reading and Maths, and so were not included in the aggregate analysis. In n=40 cases in N=16 schools only the arithmetic KS1 score/paper was provided. In n=22 cases in N=11 schools only the KS1 reading score/paper was provided
- (h) 109 pupils from 30 of the 64 control schools that provided papers/scores did not have data from both Reading and Maths, and so were not included in the aggregate analysis. In n=55 cases in N=26 schools only the arithmetic KS1 score/paper was provided. In n=54 cases in N=17 schools only the KS1 reading score/paper was provided
- (i) 40 of the 61 schools with FAST target child data provided KS1 papers/scores and hence went into the QED analysis. A total of 401 FAST target pupils went into this analysis.
- (j) SDQ analysis was at the school level and a school was present in the analysis if it had a baseline measure and either or both mid-point and end-point. Note, one school had baseline SDQ data missing in the trial as it had completed it but the package was lost in couriering transit. It was decided in consultation with SCUK not to ask this school to complete the data again, and to include it in the trial, as it had completed it in good faith.

Note the section on Methods contains information on how many schools SCUK approached in order to recruit 158 to the trial.



Figure 2: Participant flow diagram



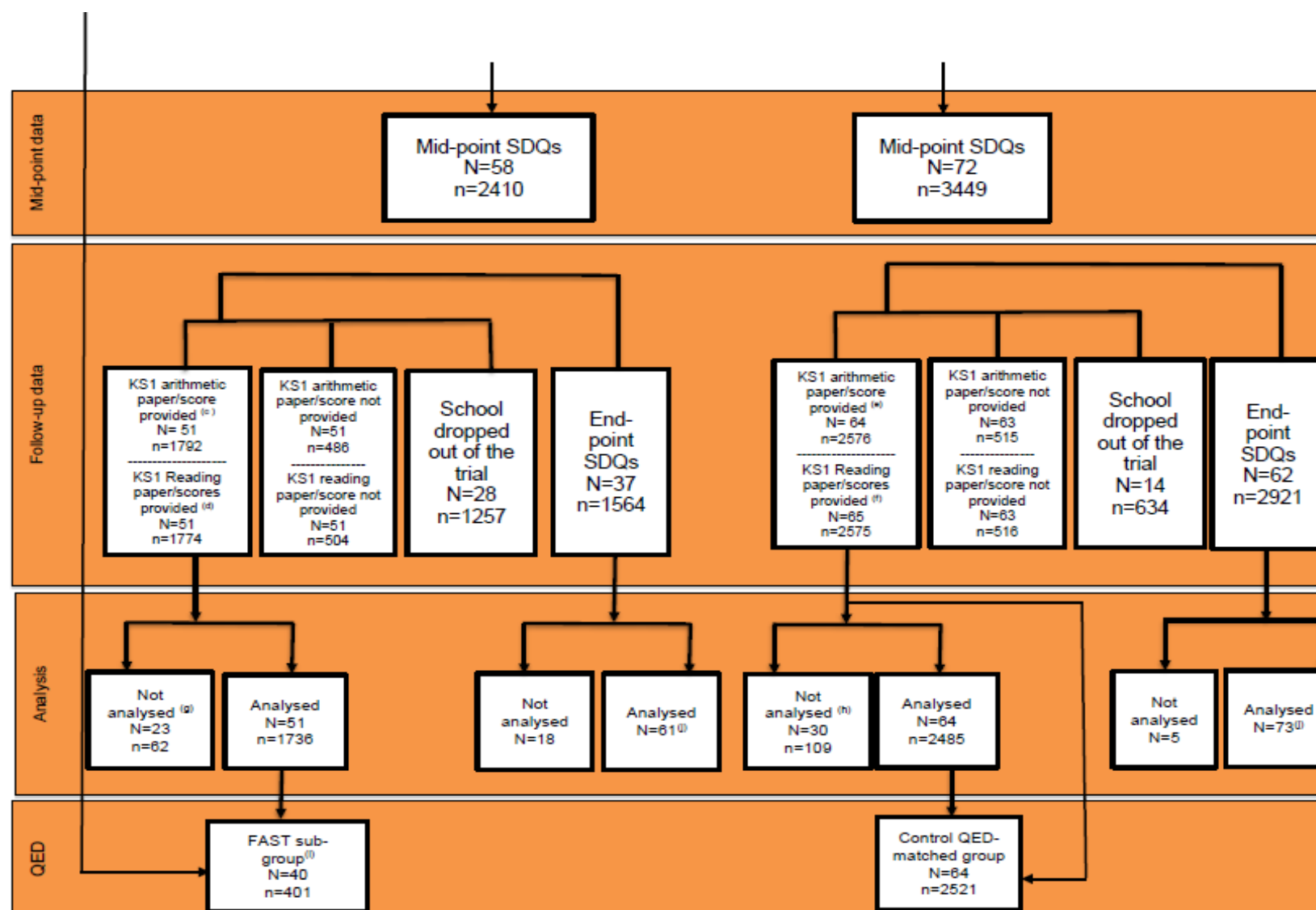


Table 5 presents the minimum detectable effect sizes at each stage of the trial, taking into account the number of schools and pupils at randomisation and in the primary analysis. In the final column of Table 5 the diluted MDES is shown, that is, the figure relating to the entire Year 1 rather than what might be expected for the FAST pupils themselves. Despite large attrition rates, the trial would still detect a reasonably small or moderate shift in attainment if present.

**Table 5: Minimum detectable effect size at different stages**

Stage	Schools N (N=intervention; N=control)	Pupils n (n=intervention; n=control)	Correlation between pre-test (+other covariates) & post-test	ICC	Blocking/ stratification or pair matching	Power	Alpha	Minimum detectable effect size (MDES)
<b>Protocol (minimum sample size)</b>	Schools 120 (60; 60)	Pupils 5160 (2580; 2580)	0.62	0.16	None assumed	80%	0.05	0.17
<b>Randomisation</b>	Schools 158 (79; 79)	Pupils 7207 (3482; 3725)	0.62	0.16	None assumed	80%	0.05	0.15
<b>Analysis (i.e. available pre- and post-test)</b>	Schools 115 (51; 64)	Pupils 4221 (1736; 2485)	0.60	0.16	Randomisation stratifiers and blocks	80%	0.05	0.18

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

## Pupil and school characteristics

Schools with greater than 20% of pupils in receipt of FSM were eligible for the study. This is reflected in the high percentages of pupils ever having been eligible for FSM (Table 6). Table 6 presents information about the baseline characteristics of the schools and pupils that were included in the primary outcome analysis (that is, it does not include those schools that withdrew from the trial and are hence not in the outcome model; the section on missing data explores this further). There were fewer schools with poor Ofsted ratings ('requires improvement' and 'inadequate') in the intervention group than in the control.

**Table 6: Baseline comparison of analysed groups**

Variable	Intervention group		Control group	
School-level (categorical)	n/N (missing)	Percentage	n/N (missing)	Percentage
<b>Ofsted rating</b>				
Outstanding	6/51 (4)	12%	5/64 (8)	8%
Good	35/51 (4)	69%	38/64 (8)	59%
Requires Improvement	6/51 (4)	12%	10/64 (8)	16%
Inadequate	0/51 (4)	0%	3/64 (8)	5%
School-level (continuous)	N (missing)	Mean	n (missing)	Mean
<b>Number of Y1 pupils</b>	51 (0)	34.0	64 (0)	38.8
<b>Ever eligible for FSM</b>	51 (0)	37.8%	64 (0)	35.6%
Pupil-level (categorical)	n/N (missing)	Percentage	n/N (missing)	Percentage
<b>Ever eligible for FSM</b>	629/1736 (0)	36%	865/2485 (2)	35%

Pupil-level (continuous)	n (missing)	Mean	n (missing)	Mean
Pre-test score (EYFSP)	1736 (0)	27.3	2485 (0)	26.6

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017. Note, we could not find current data on 12 schools' Ofsted ratings (four in the intervention group, and eight in the control group).

In addition to presenting relevant school- and pupil-level characteristics, a baseline comparison of EYFSP data was also conducted. The baseline effect size for the EYFSP data for analysed groups (intervention versus control) calculated with a multilevel model, was 0.10 (-0.01, 0.21). Although this was not statistically significant, it is consistent with the idea that lower performing schools dropped out and that this kind of attrition was greater in the intervention group, leading to the intervention group having a higher mean. This has implications for the missingness mechanism and the missing data analysis.

## Outcomes and analysis

### Primary outcome results

**Table 7: Primary analysis combined Reading and Arithmetic outcomes (with Reading and Arithmetic secondary outcomes also shown)**

Outcome	Raw means		Effect size				
	Intervention group		Control group		n in model (intervention; control)	Hedges g (95% CI)	p-value
	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI; unadjusted for clustering)	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI; unadjusted for clustering)			
Reading and Arithmetic	1752 (1730)	64.17 (63.22, 65.12)	2521 (1204)	64.29 (63.49, 65.08)	4221 (1736; 2485)	0.01 (-0.13, 0.14)	0.94
Reading	1774 (1708)	14.80 (14.57; 15.02)	2575 (1150)	14.64 (14.46; 14.83)	4294 (1757; 2537)	0.03 (-0.09, 0.15)	0.66
Arithmetic	1792 (1690)	16.98 (16.67; 17.28)	2576 (1149)	17.26 (17.01; 17.51)	4309 (1772; 2537)	-0.02 (-0.17, 0.12)	0.73
Reading and Arithmetic (everFSM only)	631 (676)	58.97 (57.25; 60.68)	871 (461)	59.70 (58.27; 61.12)	1494 (629; 865)	-0.01 (-0.18; 0.15)	0.87

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

Table 7 presents the results of the primary analysis of pupils' combined Reading and Arithmetic scores at KS1, as well as the results for the children in the trial who have ever been in receipt of free school meals (everFSM). It also provides the results for Reading and Arithmetic separately. As shown, there was no evidence that FAST had an impact on pupils' Key Stage 1 outcomes when considering the average combined points score for Reading Paper 1 and Arithmetic for the whole year group (that is, the confidence interval spans zero and the p-value is not statistically significant). This was also true for pupils who have ever been eligible for free schools meals (everFSM). It is possible that the large amount of missing data in this trial has affected what was observed in the results.

In Table 7, raw means are also included, and are based on slightly higher numbers than those used in the effect size models due to the requirement of complete data for the latter. In addition to the primary outcome ITT analysis, the model was rerun without the stratifiers, that is, with only prior attainment as a covariate. This was requested by the EEF for meta-analysis and yielded an effect size of -0.02. The primary outcome standard deviation used to calculate the effect size (total variance from a multilevel model without covariates) was 20.265.

The following interactions by intervention were modelled for the primary outcome using interaction terms: everFSM, randomisation block, prior attainment and difficulties score from SDQ. A separate model was run for each and the results are summarised in Table 8. These results suggest that there were no differential effects of the intervention for these different pupil subgroups.

**Table 8: Results of interaction models**

Variable	Raw interaction coefficient	Standard error	p value
<b>everFSM</b>	-0.32	1.00	0.75
<b>randomisation block</b>	0.23 (block2*intervention); -0.40 (block3*intervention)	3.12 (block2*intervention); 3.85 (block3*intervention)	0.94 (block2*intervention); 0.92 (block3*intervention)
<b>EYFSP</b>	0.06	0.07	0.37
<b>SDQ difficulties score</b>	0.32	0.53	0.56

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

### Missing data analysis

The large amount of attrition observed in this trial, in combination with the indication of biased dropout seen in Table 6, implies a sophisticated analysis of missing data is required. As per the SAP, this commenced with a two-level (pupil and school) logistic model of whether a pupil had a KS1 score. The model contained the following covariates: intervention group, randomisation block, region, EYFSP and everFSM. Results indicated that pupils were considerably less likely (odds ratio = 0.25;  $p < 0.01$ ) to have a KS1 score if they were in the intervention group. Furthermore, they were more likely to have a KS1 score if they went to school in the north of England (odds ratio = 2.8;  $p = 0.04$ ) or if they had a higher EYFSP score ( $p < 0.001$ ). everFSM pupils were less likely to have follow-up data (odds ratio = 0.69;  $p < 0.001$ ).

This pattern of missingness prompted the running of a multilevel multiple imputation model with a total of 40 iterations to reflect the proportion of pupil-level missing data (41%; White *et al.*, 2011). This model had the advantage of being able to use NPD KS1 reading and maths age related expectations to aid the imputation of KS1 scores. Once the substantive model was run on the multiply imputed data, sensitivity analyses were carried out using different values of delta to reflect a ‘missing not at random’ scenario. As delta increases, the probability of observing a particular variable increases with the value of that variable. Table 8 summarises the results of these analyses.  $\delta = 0$  represents the result of multiple imputation under the ‘missing at random’ scenario.

**Table 9: Results of sensitivity analysis**

$\delta$	Raw intervention coefficient	Standard error
<b>-10</b>	-4.89	5.80
<b>-7.5</b>	-3.60	6.13
<b>-5</b>	-4.64	6.19
<b>-3</b>	-3.26	5.61
<b>-1.5</b>	-4.07	6.26
<b>0</b>	-2.05	6.37
<b>1.5</b>	-6.22	6.34
<b>3</b>	-3.83	6.82
<b>5</b>	-3.17	5.59
<b>7.5</b>	-2.00	5.03
<b>10</b>	-2.00	4.08

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

Table 9 clearly demonstrates that, whilst the extent of missing data has led to sensitivity analyses deriving large oscillations (-2.00 to -6.22) in the intervention effect, they all remain less than the value of the standard error and hence nowhere near what might constitute evidence for an effect of FAST on the primary outcome.

### Further analysis of KS1 AREs

Two variables with five ordered categories, ARE5, were defined for the purposes of running the ordinal logistic regression models for reading and maths teacher-assessed AREs. These variables are equivalent to the NPD variables NPD\_KS1reading and NPD\_KS1maths. Their categories, in descending order, are thus defined (Standards and Testing Agency, 2017):

1. BLW: Below - corresponds with P-scales or NOTSEN
2. PKF: Pre-Key stage - Foundations for the expected standard
3. WTS: Working towards the expected standard
4. EXS: Working at the expected standard
5. GDS: Working at a greater depth within the expected standard

Tables 10 and 11 provide details of the number of cases available from NPD for each of the variables.

**Table 10: Number of pupils in the ARE5\_reading model (English)**

ARE5_reading	Control	Intervention	Total
BLW	69	65	134
PKF	200	204	404
WTS	764	656	1420
EXS	1905	1776	3681
GDS	687	641	1328
Total	3625	3342	6967

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017 (additional analyses).

**Table 11: Number of pupils in the ARE5\_maths model (maths)**

ARE5_maths	Control	Intervention	Total
BLW	63	57	120
PKF	198	180	378
WTS	774	724	1498
EXS	2051	1842	3893
GDS	541	540	1081
Total	3627	3343	6970

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017 (additional analyses).

In order to run the combined reading and maths attainment model, we have defined a variable with nine ordered categories, ARE9 that combines the ARE5 variables described above. Its categories, in descending order, are thus defined:

1. 2xBLW: BLW in both ARE5s
2. BLW+PKF: BLW in one ARE5 and PKF in the other
3. 2xPKF: PKF in both ARE5s
4. PKF+WTS: PKF in one ARE5 and WTS in the other
5. 2xWTS: WTS in both ARE5s
6. WTS+EXS: WTS in one ARE5 and EXS in the other
7. 2xEXS: EXS in both ARE5s
8. EXS+GDS: EXS in one ARE5 and GDS in the other

## 9. 2xGDS: EXS in both ARE5s.

Note that if the maths and English attainment levels are very different (for example, GDS in ARE5\_english but WTS in ARE5\_maths, BLW in ARE5\_english but EXS in ARE5\_maths) it is not possible to assign an ARE9 category. However, this accounts for about 1% (75 of 6967) of cases with non-missing ARE5s; in other words, combining the literacy and numeracy age related expectation variables does not lead to the exclusion of a large proportion of the observations in the control (33 cases) or intervention (42 cases) groups. Table 12 provides details of the number of cases where a combined ARE9 was created.

**Table 12: Number of pupils with a combined ARE9 (combined English and maths)**

ARE9	Control	Intervention	Total
2xBLW	60	43	103
BLW+PKF	8	23	31
2xPKF	133	118	251
PKF+WTS	97	105	202
2xWTS	500	428	928
WTS+EXS	434	400	834
2xEXS	1526	1397	2923
EXS+GDS	442	400	842
2xGDS	392	386	778
Total	3592	3300	6892

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017 (additional analyses).

After pre-testing several multilevel ordered logistic regression models with different link functions we chose the following three as shown in Table 13. Table 14 provides an overview of the attrition rates in each model (based on the number of pupils at baseline in the trial, that is, baseline UPNs). Attrition rates in these models were low, between 4.8% and 5.9% at pupil-level.

**Table 13: ARE9 and ARE5 models**

Model	Dependent Variable	Link function	Covariate	Dummy indicators	Clustering	N obs
Combined reading and maths ARE (ARE_9)	ARE9	logit	weighted average of the EYFSP components	intervention, randomisation block, region (north/south)	school	6783
Reading ARE (ARE5_reading)	ARE5_reading	probit	sum of the EYFSP communication and literacy components	intervention, randomisation block, region (north/south)	school	6857
Maths ARE (ARE5_maths)	ARE5_maths	probit	sum of the EYFSP mathematics components	intervention, randomisation block, region (north/south)	school	6860

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017 (additional analyses).

**Table 14: Attrition rates in the ARE models**

Model	No. UPNs at baseline	N_ARE	N_Model	Attrition	Attrition rate (from baseline to Model)
ARE_9	7207	6892	6783	424	5.88%
ARE5_reading	7207	6967	6857	350	4.86%
ARE5_maths	7207	6970	6860	347	4.81%

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017 (additional analyses).



To evaluate the significance of the intervention as a parameter of the model, we have opted for a more accurate likelihood ratio test that can be obtained via the 'ordinal' package's ANOVA method instead of relying on the default Wald statistic. To test the significance of a model's parameter, the likelihood ratio test compares the model with a similar model where the parameter is absent under the null hypothesis that both models fit the data similarly. The results are shown in Table 15.

**Table 15: LRT p-values**

Model	Likelihood ratio test p-value
Combined reading and maths ARE logit model	0.50
Reading AR probit model	0.99
Maths ARE probit model	0.27

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017 (additional analyses).

### Quasi-experimental analysis

The above demonstrates as robustly as possible with the data available that there was no effect of FAST on the entire Year 1 cohort's KS1 scores. It was then necessary to discern whether there was an effect on the FAST 'target' pupils themselves. Since only 18%<sup>11</sup> of the Year 1 cohort enrolled on the FAST programme there was a substantial dilution of any direct effect before it might be detected by the above analyses. The quasi-experimental analysis capitalised on the fact that there were children in control schools who, had they been randomised to receive FAST, would have enrolled on FAST themselves. Unfortunately, due to the classification of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) as sensitive personal data, these NPD data fields were not obtainable as originally planned. The measures upon which we could create a matched comparison group for the FAST children were therefore severely limited.

The first step was to create a dataset consisting only of FAST 'target' pupils and control pupils by excluding pupils in FAST schools that did not experience FAST. A propensity score model, a logistic model of 'being in FAST', was then run using the following variables: gender, everFSM and EYFSP. This resulted in no pupils being excluded from either the FAST group or the control group through common support. This was probably due to the limitations of the model brought about by having only three covariates. A multilevel regression model was then run using the same covariates and this resulted in a quasi-effect of FAST of -0.06 (-0.24, 0.13). This implies that, even when we pare down the data to remove the dilution effect of the design, there is still no effect of FAST on attainment—noting that this result was not based on randomisation and is therefore not causal.

### Complier Average Causal Effect (CACE)

The FAST family register provided the number of sessions each child had attended. On inspection of the data, it transpired that the number of sessions varied from one to nine, rather than the expected eight sessions. Upon further investigation with Save the Children, it transpired that FAST had been relaunched in a small number of schools after the initial first week, where very limited numbers had attended, so there was a new 'week 1'. SCUK explored this and found that for all intents and purposes nine weeks could be re-coded to eight (that these were small number of families that attended the original curtailed Week 1). We therefore recoded all values of nine to eight. We intended to use the eefAnalytics R package to run CACE but opted for ivpack instead as there were a couple of issues with eefAnalytics and ivpack allowed the modelling of a continuous dosage measure.

Two CACE models were run: one using 'number of FAST sessions attended' as a pseudo-continuous dosage measure and the other based on a dichotomous measure of whether a pupil 'graduated'. A pupil graduated if they attended six or more FAST sessions—83% of Year 1 families taking part in FAST graduated. As compliance varied at the pupil level, the CACE models were single level but the 95% confidence intervals were corrected for clustering. The continuous compliance measure yielded an

<sup>11</sup> This figure is based on the number of identifiable and consented FAST 'target' Year 1s.



effect size, per one unit increase in number of FAST sessions attended, of -0.03 (-0.12, 0.07). The dichotomous graduation measure yielded an effect size of -0.21 (-0.97, 0.56). These results imply that when the number of FAST sessions attended is taken into account, there is still no association between experience of FAST and attainment.

### Secondary outcome results from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires

To evaluate the impact of the intervention on children's behaviour and mental health, teachers were asked to fill a behavioural screening questionnaire, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The SDQ evaluates five different behavioural aspects: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour. The first four aspects of the SDQ can be combined in a total difficulties scale that evaluates the risk of mental health disorders. The analysis of the SDQ was carried out as per the SAP on the following measures: total difficulties score, impact score, and prosocial behaviour score. Responses were scored as per <http://www.sdqinfo.com/> then aggregated to school level. A school was present in the analysis if it had a baseline measure and at least one measure at mid-point or follow-up. The analysis treated baseline as a covariate and the two follow-up measures as repeated measures. This was more efficient than running two separate models for each follow-up time-point as more cases were retained. Such models are more difficult to interpret from coefficients alone so the results are presented graphically. In addition, to aid interpretation of the extent of the difference observed at each time-point, results from independent samples t-tests comparing the intervention and control groups are presented in Table 16. These results are not taken from the modelling, were not from analysis pre-specified in the SAP, and should be read in the context of the caveats described below.

**Table 16: SDQ results based on independent samples t-test analyses at single time-points; effect sizes based on school-level variance only**

Outcome	Mid-point			End-point		
	Intervention mean	Control mean	Effect size (Hedges' g) and p-value	Intervention mean	Control mean	Effect size (Hedges' g) and p-value
Total difficulties	6.57	7.73	-0.43 (p=0.02)	7.08	6.73	0.15 (p=0.47)
Impact	0.37	0.46	-0.22 (p=0.21)	0.42	0.40	0.05 (p=0.79)
Prosocial behaviour	7.90	7.51	0.33 (p=0.06)	7.55	7.92	-0.42 (p=0.05)

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

### Total difficulties score

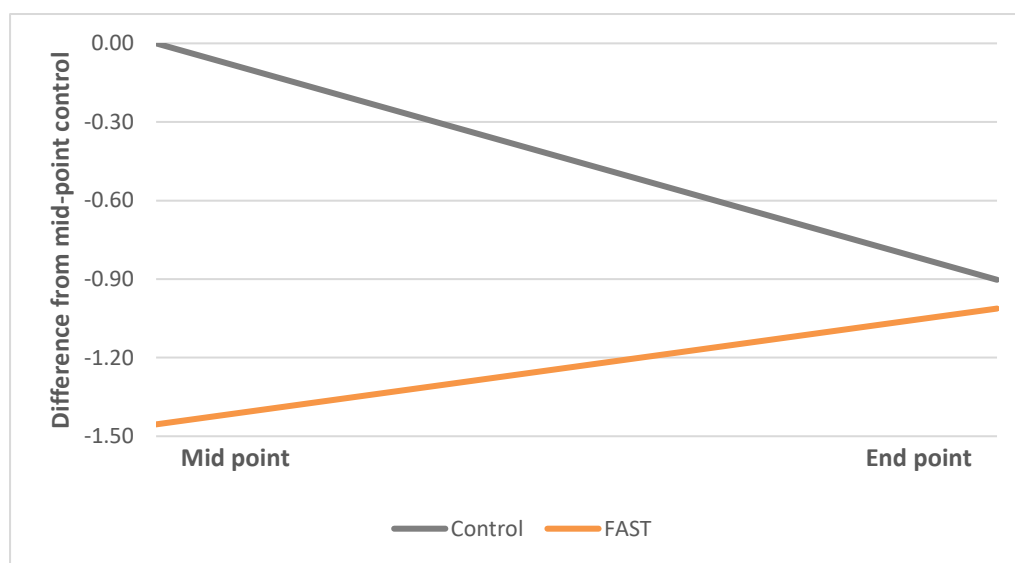
To measure the effect of the intervention on the risk of mental health disorder at school level and its duration, we fitted a two-level model that estimates the mean value of the total difficulties score in a school as a function of several predictors and their interactions. Included in the list of predictors are whether the school was randomised into the FAST or control group and if the assessments were performed at mid- or end-point.

The total difficulties score is measured in the 0–40 range, with an increase in this score corresponding to an increase in the risk of mental health disorder. Figure 3 shows the variation of the average mean total difficulties scores of schools in the FAST and control groups once the other explanatory factors<sup>12</sup> of the model have been accounted for. Note that the figure displays the difference from the mid-point

<sup>12</sup> The remaining factors included in the model were mean total difficulties score at the onset of the trial, randomisation block, and region of the school.

control group value of the average mean total difficulties score for schools at mid-point and end-point, not the actual mean total difficulty scores. It therefore shows the control group as zero at mid-point.

**Figure 3: Variation in average school mean for ‘total difficulties score’**



Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

Our model suggests that, on average, the intervention was effective at lowering the risk of mental health disorder at school level (that is, lowering school averages for the total difficulties score in FAST schools). The average mean score for the FAST intervention group was significantly lower than that of the control group, both at mid- and end-point. However, the gap between the average mean scores of the intervention and control group decreased after the conclusion of the intervention.

To interpret the results of the analysis further, it is helpful to explore the difference between the control and intervention groups at each point. This is frequently accomplished by quantifying the magnitude of the difference between the means of the two groups via the measurement of an effect size. For both mid- and end-point we have computed effect sizes (Hedges'  $g$ ) based on the differences between the average mean scores of the schools in each group standardised by the pooled standard deviation.<sup>13</sup> These effect sizes, as shown in Table 16, were obtained from the analysis of independent samples  $t$ -tests.

For the mean total difficulties score, the effect size measured at mid-point was 0.43 and at end-point was 0.15. However, note that the effect sizes mentioned in the previous sections of this report for the primary outcome were calculated using the total variance from a multilevel model. The Hedges'  $g$  measures reported in this section<sup>14</sup> concern school-level mean scores and have to be interpreted considering this context—that is, models with school-level means tend to inflate effect sizes and may not necessarily match the direction of the effects derived from the model with interactions described above.

<sup>13</sup> The pooled standard deviation is computed as  $s^* = \sqrt{\frac{(N_i-1)s_i^2 + (N_c-1)s_c^2}{N_i+N_c-2}}$  with  $N_i$  and  $N_c$  being the number of schools in the intervention and control groups, and  $s_i$  and  $s_c$  the standard deviations of the mean scores measured in the schools of the intervention and control groups.

<sup>14</sup> The Hedges'  $g$ s were computed considering school level mean scores whose associated standard deviations are generally smaller than the corresponding standard deviations for the pupil level scores. As such, the magnitudes of the Hedge's  $g$ s tend to be inflated when compared to the magnitude of effect sizes computed for pupil level measurements and multilevel models.

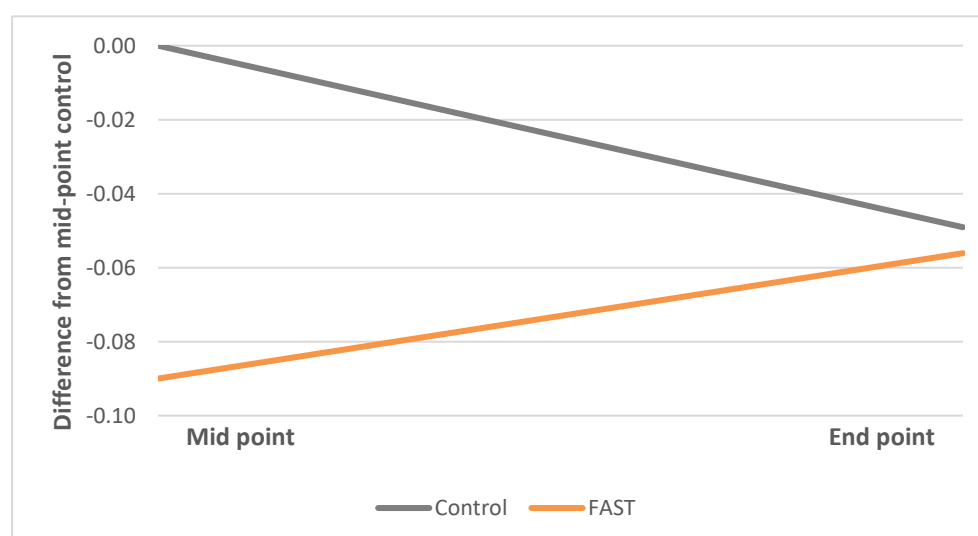
Without taking into account any factors other than the group a school was randomised into, the variation in the magnitude of the Hedges'  $g$  effect sizes derived from the independent samples  $t$ -test suggests that at mid-point there was a discernible difference between the average mean scores of the intervention and control groups that was substantially weakened and changed sign at end-point. This is in line with the results obtained from the interaction model described above where a decrease in the magnitude of the difference between the average mean scores of the intervention and control group between mid- and end-point was seen.

### Impact score

To evaluate the impact of the behavioural difficulties experienced by their pupils, teachers were also asked to complete the impact supplement of the SDQ. In the supplement teachers were asked if they thought pupils were facing behaviour or emotional problems and, if so, enquired further about chronicity, distress, social impairment, and burden to others. The answers to the supplement were compiled to produce a 0 to 10 points impact score, with an increase in the score corresponding to an increase in the impact of the pupils' behavioural difficulties on themselves, their teachers and their peers.

As in the case of the total difficulties score described above, we also fitted a two-level model that estimates the mean value of the impact score in a school as a function of several predictors and their interactions. Figure 4 shows the variation of the average mean impact scores of schools in the FAST and control groups once the other explanatory factors<sup>15</sup> of the model have been accounted for. Note that the figure displays the difference from the mid-point control group value of the average mean impact score for schools at mid-point and end-point, not the actual mean impact scores. It therefore shows the control group as zero at mid-point.

**Figure 4: Variation in average school mean 'impact score'**



Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

The patterns of variation of the mean impact score for schools in the control and intervention groups mirror those observed in the total difficulties score, both for the interaction model and the independent samples  $t$ -tests.

When considering the interaction model, although the average mean score for schools in the intervention group is lower than that of the control group at both mid- and end-point, the average mean score for the intervention group has increased from mid- to end-point while that of the control group has

<sup>15</sup> The extra factors included in the model were mean impact score at the onset of the trial, randomisation block, and region of the school.

decreased. However, and unlike the case of the mean total difficulties score, the differences in the average mean scores were not statistically significant.

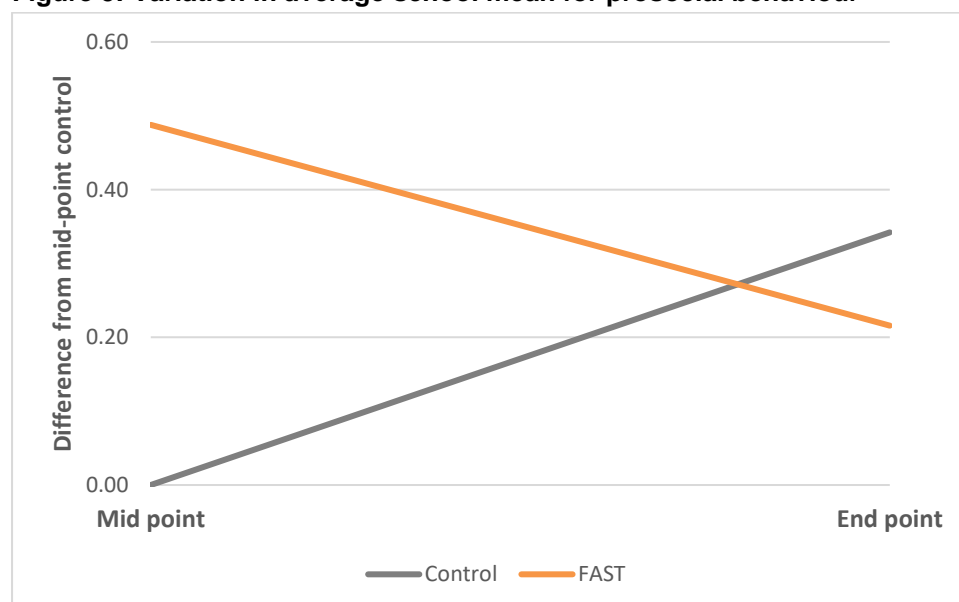
The analysis of the Hedges'  $g$  effects also point to a pattern of variation that is similar to the one observed in the corresponding analysis of total difficulties score: the difference in average mean scores between the FAST and control groups not only decreases in magnitude but also changes sign between mid- and end-point. As was the case with the interaction model, none of the differences in average mean scores were statistically significant.

### Prosocial behaviour

The SDQ also allows for the assessment of positive behavioural aspects and interactions, and these are quantified in the prosocial behaviour scale that evaluates how often a child engages in behaviours that are intended to 'benefit one or more people other than oneself—behaviours such as helping, comforting, sharing and cooperation'.<sup>16</sup> The scores of the prosocial behaviour are scored in the 0–10 range, with an increase in this score corresponding to an increase in the likelihood of the pupils behaving in a prosocial manner.

We have again employed the methodology described above to quantify the effect of the intervention on prosocial behaviour at school level and fitted a two-level model that estimates the mean prosocial behaviour score in a school as a function of several predictors and their interactions. Figure 5 shows the variation of the average mean prosocial behaviour scores of schools in the FAST and control groups once the remaining explanatory factors<sup>17</sup> of the model have been accounted for. Note that the figure displays the difference from the mid-point control group value of the average mean prosocial behaviour score for schools at mid-point and end-point, not the actual mean prosocial behaviour scores. It therefore shows the control group as zero at mid-point.

**Figure 5: Variation in average school mean for prosocial behaviour**



Source: NFER FAST evaluation, 2015–2017.

Although the average mean score for the intervention group was significantly higher than that of the control at mid-point (that is, on average, the intervention seemed effective at improving prosocial behaviour), the inverse situation was observed once the end-point was reached. That is, FAST schools

<sup>16</sup> Batson, C.D., 'Altruism and prosocial behavior', in G. Lindzey, D. Gilbert, and S.T. Fiske, *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (New York: McGraw Hill).

<sup>17</sup> The remaining factors included in the model were mean prosocial behaviour score at the onset of the trial, randomisation block, and region of the school.

recorded more positive behaviours in the immediate period after the eight-week programme but these had declined and indeed the effect reversed at the end of the trial period. This contrasted with the control group where control schools recorded more positive prosocial behaviours on average. The differences, in this case, were statistically significant.

As before, we have also calculated effect sizes in terms of Hedges'  $g$  derived from independent samples  $t$ -tests, to contextualise the expression of the differences between groups at both mid- and end-point. For the mean prosocial behaviour score, the effect sizes measured at mid- and end-point were of similar magnitude but opposite signs ( $g = 0.33$  and  $g = -0.42$ , respectively, with only the negative effect size being statistically significant). That is, at mid-point the intervention group was more positive, but at end-point the control group was more positive. The interpretation of these effect sizes has to take into account the caveats we have mentioned before: namely, that no other factors besides a school being in the control or intervention group were accounted for, and that any extrapolation from these school level means (which tend to inflate effect sizes) to pupil level should be avoided.

## Cost

This section presents the costs of the intervention in terms of what it would cost a school to self-fund the entire costs of delivering FAST (with the exception of buying the training: there is no current figure available for what this would cost a school to buy). It also discusses the FAST grant which was offered to schools in the trial and is also available in real-world running of FAST. It presents costs in terms of the overarching experiment—the cost per Year 1 pupil regardless of participation in the FAST eight-week cycle itself. Costs per FAST 'target' pupil are also estimated. Costs are presented over three years, assuming a school will undertake a further cycle of FAST each year.

**Table 17: Cost per pupil (taking whole year group into account)**

Number of years using the programme	Cumulative Cost Per Pupil	Average Cost Per Pupil
1	£50.50	£50.50
2	£97.58	£48.79
3	£144.65	£48.22

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, intervention school end-point pro-formas 2017.

**Table 18: Cost per 'target' pupil (i.e. per FAST child)**

Number of years using the programme	Cumulative Cost Per FAST Family	Average Cost Per FAST Family
1	£139.05	£139.05
2	£268.68	£134.34
3	£398.30	£132.77

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, intervention school end-point pro-formas 2017

In this trial, the number of schools included in the cost analysis was only 15 due to a lack of, or poor quality, data. Across these schools, the average number of Year 1 pupils was 39 and the average number of FAST families (those families directly involved in the eight week intervention session) was 14. From this, cumulative and average cost per Year 1 pupil and per FAST family could be calculated respectively. The average cost per pupil up to and including three years using the programme is very low (£, appendix A), while average cost per 'target pupil' (that is, per FAST child or FAST family) is low (££, appendix A). This means that the cumulative costs in both instances are correspondingly inexpensive. This average expenditure falls within the £2,800 grant that SCUK allocates per school per cycle of FAST, that is, the cost of FAST to a school is covered by the grant schools receive.

Table 19 provides a breakdown of the expenditure by the 15 schools that provided detailed data on costs.

**Table 19: Breakdown of costs to schools**

Category	Phase 1	Phase 2	FASTworks	Total average spend per school <sup>2</sup>	Average per Y1 pupil per school <sup>3</sup>	Average per FAST child per school <sup>4</sup>
Average spend per school £						
Catering (food, refreshments, meals)	81.73	509.04	50.67	641.44	16.25	44.75
Training (travel, attendance) <sup>1</sup>	61.33	0.00	73.73	135.07	3.42	9.42
Resources (arts and crafts, play resources)	41.60	134.84	38.88	215.32	5.46	15.02
Childcare (or parent facilitators or staff)	25.93	137.07	0.00	163.00	4.13	11.37
Special activities (venue hire, coach costs, tickets, trips)	0.00	55.67	150.87	206.53	5.23	14.41
Rewards (hampers, gifts and prizes)	0.00	212.85	23.33	236.19	5.98	16.48
Graduation (photography etc.)	0.00	134.36	0.00	134.36	3.40	9.37
External speaker	0.00	6.67	0.00	6.67	0.17	0.47
Other (miscellaneous)	29.49	66.67	5.33	101.49	2.57	7.08
Multiple items listed	0.00	116.33	36.67	153.00	3.88	10.67
Totals £	230.09	1,373.49	379.48	1,993.06	50.50	139.05

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, intervention school end-point pro-formas 2017. Figures are rounded to 2dp.

<sup>1</sup> This does not include the cost of buying the training; this cost is unknown to SCUK as it is not part of their current delivery model to charge schools.

<sup>2</sup> Based on the 15 schools providing cost data.

<sup>3</sup> Based on an average of 39 Y1 pupils in the schools providing cost data.

<sup>4</sup> Based on an average of 14 'FAST' pupils in the schools providing cost data.

In addition to the cost to schools, Table 20 below presents SCUK's breakdown of the cost of providing a cycle of FAST to a school. Note, it is not part of SCUK's current delivery model to charge schools. These costs have not been included in our cost calculations per pupil per year.

**Table 20: SCUK delivery costs for running a cycle of FAST**

Grant to school (food, hampers, graduation, on-costs)	£2,800
FAST works and Parent Progression	£1,000
SCUK staff salaries	£5,550
SCUK staff travel & accommodation	£750
Payments to Middlesex University (licence fee, evaluation report, MU core costs)	£5,450
Marketing, research and development	£250
ICR (8%)	£1,260
ICE (6%)	£940
<b>Total cost per cycle</b>	<b>£18,000</b>

Source: SCUK data (2018).

By far the largest total expense for schools was catering, which averaged at £44.75 per FAST family, though the vast majority of this was seen in Phase 2. Catering was the biggest cost of both Phase 1 and Phase 2. The second highest expense was the rewards schools gave to participants, including the hampers SCUK recommends. Again, this cost predominantly occurred in Phase 2 of the intervention. The biggest expense during FASTworks specifically and third largest cost overall was special activities and their associated costs such as day trips or venue hire. Unsurprisingly, the most expensive phase

of the FAST intervention is Phase 2. The cost of Phase 1 will reduce when the intervention is repeated (known as a second cycle of FAST), as training does not need to be repeated for at least two years (unless new local delivery partners come on board), while the costs of Phases 2 and 3 will likely remain similar.

It should be noted that due to the length of FASTworks, FASTworks costs may spill into a second year of expenditure. We cannot know exactly how the school's spending was spread over these years, however, as the distribution of FAST costs across the entire intervention will vary based on each school's preference.

One important caveat to highlight is the rather large variation we observed in school expenditure in these schools. Excluding staff costs, the difference between the highest and lowest school spending on FAST was £4,000, which equates to £200 per pupil or £289 per FAST family. A large degree of this variation is likely a consequence of the preferences of each school on the activities, resources, and rewards that were produced for the intervention. For example, where one school had a disco, another had a picnic in the park, while others reported no such activities. Furthermore, one case study school noted spending a considerable sum on cinema tickets as incentives for parents to join the programme.

It is also important to be mindful that staffing costs are not included in this analysis. This means that possible costs incurred by the school specifically relating to FAST that involve staff cover, additional staff, or overtime are not included. Thus the real cost of FAST may be higher than indicated by this analysis, though the extent to which this is true will vary from school to school.

Once FAST has been implemented, set up costs are eliminated as staff do not need to be retrained, which lowers the cost of repeating the intervention. This reduction in cost, however, is relatively small at £2.28 per pupil or £6.28 per FAST family. The majority of this saving in repeat cycles of FAST will be seen in Phase 1.

The majority of costs reported by these schools are covered by their grant, for which all schools (trial and real world) are eligible. Schools taking part in FAST receive a grant from SCUK to cover their expenditure as part of FAST and, in the majority of cases, costs reported by schools were covered by this grant. A relatively small proportion of the costs (typically less than 10%) were incurred by the schools themselves. The exception to this was childcare provision: in this instance, 74% of costs were incurred by SCUK and the remaining 26% of childcare costs were incurred by the schools taking part in the trial intervention. For one of the case study schools, the school put on extra childcare to fulfil the evaluation requirements of the FAST trial. It may be that this occurred across a number of schools, perhaps explaining why childcare costs were greater than anticipated by the SCUK grant. That said, the organisation incurring the cost of a particular item (the school or SCUK via a grant) was poorly reported in the pro-formas.

The evaluation also collected information on the time staff spent on FAST activities (apart from the eight 2.5-hour programme sessions).



**Table 21: Number of hours spent on FAST**

Number of Hours spent on FAST activities (excluding 8 FAST sessions)	Average	Range (minimum and maximum hours spent on FAST)
<b>Per School</b>	48	10–103
<b>Per Pupil</b>	1	0–4
<b>Per ‘target’ pupil (i.e. FAST child/family)</b>	5	1–21
<b>Phase 1</b>	23	0–74
<b>Phase 2</b>	19	3–40
<b>FASTworks</b>	5	0–16

Source: NFER FAST evaluation, intervention school end-point pro-formas 2017.

Following the trial, only 12 schools reported the time-cost of FAST-related activities in the correct form with high quality and detailed data. Table 21 shows the hours dedicated to FAST across these 12 schools. Due to the additional cases that had to be excluded, the average number of pupils across these schools was 44 and the average number of FAST families was 13.

Phase 1 demanded the most time from staff, reflecting the planning and recruitment phase of the intervention. As the phases of the intervention progressed, the number of hours spent on FAST activities decreased. The single most time-consuming item of the FAST intervention was planning time, which demanded the largest number of hours in each phase as well as across the whole intervention. Conversely, time spent facilitating the graduation from FAST required the least overall amount of time from staff. For the majority of FAST activities, over two thirds of these hours were in addition to staff's normal working hours. This indicates that FAST requires a large time commitment from schools, often requiring commitment from staff outside of normal working hours.

Indeed, this was reflected in interviews: most of the FAST co-ordinators and local partners we interviewed commented that FAST required additional time commitment in their own time to source and purchase resources and provisions. A senior school leader in a case study school noted how ‘time heavy’ FAST was in terms of releasing staff for review meetings and providing necessary classroom cover. Some schools tried to reduce the burden on partners by buying additional capacity, such as paying school Teaching Assistants to set up the FAST rooms after school had finished prior to FAST starting. One FAST co-ordinator remarked: ‘We ended up having an extra afternoon of LSA time to get the room and activities ready. Turnaround time from school finishing at 3.15 and FAST starting at 3.30 was very tight.’ Another school partner (teacher) said that involvement in FAST was only made possible by the presence of a student to assist with his/her teaching responsibilities during the eight weeks of FAST.

Again, it is important to note the large variation in the hours spent on FAST activities from school to school. At the school level, there was a variation of 93 hours, varying from 10 to 103. This is likely due to a difference in each school's attitude to the appropriate time to spend on planning and preparing throughout the FAST interventions. It is difficult to interpret whether the time commitments made were a true reflection of the demands of the intervention or a reflection of the way that individuals or schools choose to work. For example, in the case studies, one FAST co-ordinator estimated that FAST required at least one day a week to manage effectively, and in this school, senior managers were ‘apprehensive and concerned’ about the amount of time this staff member was committing to it; however, there was universal agreement in this case study school that the contribution had been worth it at the end of the programme.



## Process evaluation

### Summary

- Schools generally engaged positively with the FAST programme, and were motivated to get involved so as to improve parent-school engagement and enhance their support on offer to parents. Reasons for not joining the programme included concerns about the high level of staff time and commitment required, and being unable to identify a suitable member of staff to co-ordinate the programme.
- Recruiting local partners was a challenge for most schools—particularly community partners (such as health and social care professionals)—due to time commitments and employers being unable to release staff.
- Schools and delivery partners felt the training prepared them well for delivering FAST, citing it as high quality and well-delivered, and that it gave them a good theoretical and practical understanding of the programme. However, partners would have liked more information on the expectations of the programme at the start, and a less formulaic approach to the training.
- Recruiting families was achieved by schools through coffee mornings, newsletters and engaging some parents as advocates to recruit others more reticent to join. Other commitments, childcare and some cultural/language boundaries prevented some families from joining the programme.
- The eight-week FAST programme was well liked. In particular, participants enjoyed the time just for parents to speak and share experiences (known as Parent Time), dedicated one-to-one time with the FAST child (Special Play), and the Family Meal which engendered a great sense of pride and achievement amongst each family making the meal for the group.
- Some delivery and engagement challenges were noted, particularly the conceptual approach of the FAST programme (which some parents took a while to get used to), some repetitive elements (such as Emotional Charades), logistical challenges in organising rooms and spaces, and Hub dynamics (for example, where there were strained relationships between families or more vocal participants).
- Programme fidelity was on the whole reasonable. Cancellation rates at 20% (schools leaving the programme early) were similar to real-world cancellations. Graduation rates at 83% were also similar to real-world rates.
- Some minor adaptations were made to FAST in some of the schools in response to local circumstances (for example timetable changes to accommodate Bonfire Night). A small number of schools ran FAST with one Hub only (rather than the required two or more) so as to stay in the trial. A couple of schools made more substantial changes by, for example, including all children in Special Play on a rotating basis, and partners providing prompts for parents during Buddy Time. At the very least, this means some parents and children did not experience all elements of FAST as the 'norm'.
- Year 1 recruitment was lower than expected for the trial at around 18% (the target was one third of all Year 1s) thus increasing the dilution effect. Schools boosted recruitment with families from Reception and Year 2 (but these year groups were not included in the trial or the process evaluation).
- FASTworks was not taken up as expected. The majority of sites either did not take part in FASTworks or did not supply data. Families in 22 schools met relatively regularly over at least three or four months during FASTworks; and a further 11 sites attempted FASTworks, but discontinued due to low take up. FASTworks activities include a range of trips, as well as coffee mornings and arts and crafts sessions.
- Perceived outcomes for FAST children included improved relationships with parents in both the short- and longer-term; improvements to meal time behaviour; and some improvements in these children's engagement with school and learning in terms of focus and concentration. No improvements to the wider year group were noted (aside from a few anecdotes).
- Perceived outcomes for FAST parents included enhanced parenting strategies in the home particularly around mealtime routines; enhanced friendship networks; and for some, increased engagement with school and their child's learning.
- Outcomes for schools included increased capacity and knowledge of how to engage parents, although some noted that improved parental engagement was difficult to sustain in the longer-term.
- Suggestions for improving the programme focused on: better information about training and delivery expectations at the start of the programme, more training including time to practice, reducing some of the 'Americanised' aspects of the programme, and better guidance and support for FASTworks.
- Both intervention and control group schools appeared to have engaged in other similar parental engagement and family support initiatives during the trial period—indicating no resentful demoralisation or over-compensation by control schools for not receiving FAST. This also indicated that intervention schools were able to host other engagement programmes in the same time period as FAST—which for most schools was felt to be an intensive programme, at least for the training and eight-week period.

This process evaluation draws on qualitative data from three training observations, two programme delivery observations,<sup>18</sup> interviews from eight case study evaluation visits<sup>19</sup> and five follow-up visits,<sup>20</sup> telephone interviews with 28 school FAST co-ordinators, and telephone interviews with four SCUK representatives. It also draws on quantitative FAST Family Register data relating to the 79 intervention schools, quantitative and qualitative data about FASTworks collected on the end-point school pro-forma, and SCUK's internal audit of FASTworks as well as baseline and end-point school information about any other parental engagement programmes schools have engaged with during the trial period.

## Implementation

This section discusses perceptions of the key features and challenges experienced in each of the following areas of FAST (reflecting the chronological order of the programme): school recruitment/signing up to FAST; recruitment of partners; training and preparation for delivery; recruitment of families; delivery of the eight-week programme; implementation of FASTworks.

### School recruitment

As noted in the Methods section of this report, the school recruitment process took place over three terms (summer 2015 for Block 1 schools; autumn 2015 for Block 2 schools; and spring 2016 for Block 3 schools). It required substantial effort from SCUK staff as they had not previously recruited to FAST at this scale in this time period.

Where schools signed up to FAST, a key motivation was wanting to improve parent-school relationships and enhance the support on offer to parents. Most school FAST co-ordinators noted that their schools were in areas of high deprivation where many parents were isolated and perhaps lacked the social and emotional confidence to engage with the school to support their children's learning.

*We got involved with FAST to break down barriers and communicate with parents more effectively and to promote better relationships with the school and in the community (school partner).*

*I thought it would be really good for our school ... Everything that FAST stands for isn't happening in our school (FAST co-ordinator).*

Where schools did not convert from EOI to sign-up, reasons included: being unable to identify a member of staff to take on the role of the school FAST co-ordinator, feeling that they would be unable to find local partners to deliver the programme, and concerns about the high level of staff time and commitment required. One strategic interviewee observed: 'Initially, heads would be very interested, but once they found out exactly what was required, [some] became less interested—too many demands.' In some cases, SCUK staff felt a school was not ready for FAST, for example as they felt the school did not have the organisational support in place to host FAST or appeared to have other competing priorities.

All FAST schools that signed up to FAST had to nominate a co-ordinator to be the main point of contact for FAST in the school. School FAST co-ordinators were generally a senior member of staff with responsibility for family liaison. Once assigned to the intervention group, they then oversaw the recruitment of local partners (discussed below).

<sup>18</sup> Note, one programme observation was cancelled on the day due to staff sickness.

<sup>19</sup> In Block 3, it was not possible to secure three case study schools mainly due to the closeness to the end of term, despite efforts by NFER, CCFR and SCUK to invite schools to take part.

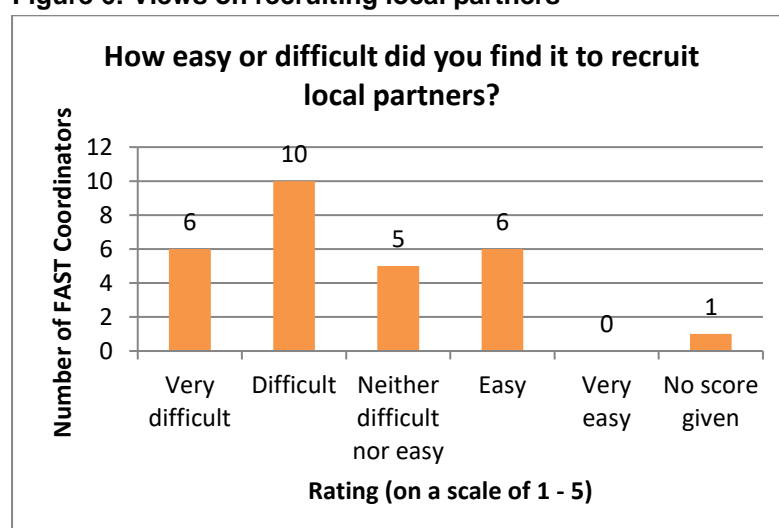
<sup>20</sup> At follow-up (one year on), one of the eight case study schools pulled out of the process evaluation, and two schools did not respond to communications to visit or take part in alternative telephone interviews or email information exchange, despite efforts by NFER, CCFR and SCUK.

### Recruitment of partners—Who are they and how are they recruited?

Over 600 local partners were recruited to deliver FAST by schools in the RCT (with an average of four school partners, three parent partners and three community partners per school—increasing or decreasing depending on number of hubs).<sup>21</sup> School partners were drawn from a range of roles, including headteachers, senior leaders, classroom teachers (across all year groups) and teaching assistants/support staff. Parent partners were often parents already well known and active in the life of the school community (including parent governors and members of parents' forum). The role of community partner was filled by a variety of individuals, including parents whose children had left the school, people well known and active in the wider community (such as those involved in youth work projects), representatives of faith groups, university students, health and social care professionals, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), local councillors, and members of school staff such as lunchtime supervisors. (Although note, within each school just one or two kinds of community partners were involved.)

We asked 28 school FAST co-ordinators to rate on a scale of 1–5 how easy or difficult they found it to recruit local partners to deliver FAST in their school.

**Figure 6: Views on recruiting local partners**



Source: NFER School FAST co-ordinator telephone interviews (N=28).

Rating (1 = very difficult, 2 = difficult, 3 = neither difficult nor easy, 4 = easy, 5 = very easy).

As shown in Figure 6, the majority of those interviewed reported difficulties in securing the involvement of local partners—in particular the required number of partners (see section on Fidelity), with community partners being especially problematic. Reasons included the harsh local economic conditions made it hard for employers to release staff, the short timeframe available to recruit partners,<sup>22</sup> a lack of community cohesion in the area, high expectations and a high level of responsibility placed on partners, and work and childcare commitments. It was also noted that the time commitment required to attend the training sessions, the eight-week programme sessions, and review meetings was a substantial barrier to many potential partners.

Despite the difficulties, according to school and SCUK interviewees, recruitment was most effective when a key person in the school had a good knowledge of likely partners and could identify an appropriate person who would be well suited to the role. In some cases, the school FAST co-ordinators

<sup>21</sup> This figure is imputed from partial data provided by SCUK from 15 schools that had an average of 11 partners each.

<sup>22</sup> This timeframe is usually 2–3 weeks; in some instances this timeframe was reduced to the lower limit in order to deliver within the parameters of the trial (see section on Limitations).

approached people already working in and with the school to be community partners, and parents who had previously overcome particular difficulties themselves to become parent partners. Much of the success of the recruitment process depended on the personality and skills of the co-ordinator and the relationships he or she had with parents and wider community members. In addition, securing the involvement of a key community member, such as a well-known and respected parent or ex-parent at the school who could act as an advocate to encourage others to become partners, was also an effective strategy. In some instances, the trainer had supported the partner recruitment process, either by directly identifying potential partners, or in advising and encouraging the FAST co-ordinator. The section on Fidelity provides further details of the numbers of partners involved in the FAST RCT schools.

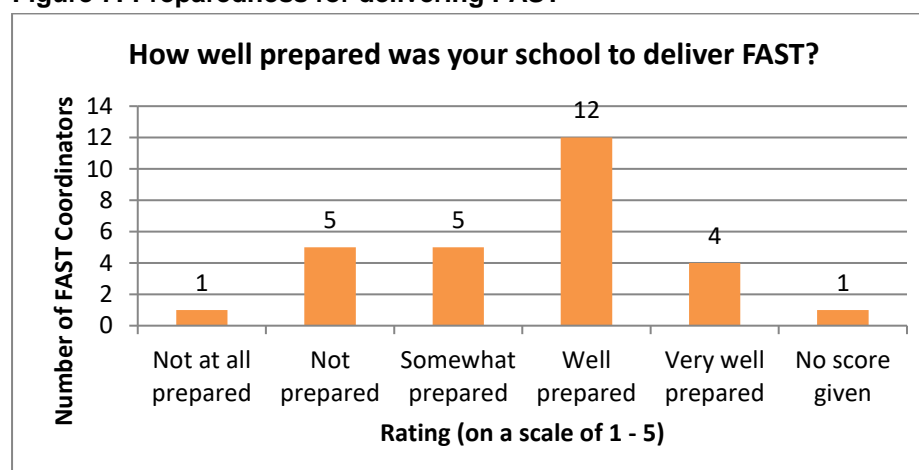
Partners' generally became involved in FAST for the perceived opportunities for them to use their skills and experience to help others in their schools and communities, to accumulate further experience in their professional areas of interest to support their future career development, and as a means of giving something back to their local communities. One parent partner, for example, said FAST was 'a chance to help and empower people' (parent partner), whilst a Year 1 school partner saw involvement as a great opportunity to interact with pupils to help improve understandings of the children's wider social and emotional contexts:

*As a Year 1 teacher, I thought it would be a massive benefit to get to know the children in a more social setting, to get to know them and their families better. ...I thought I don't want this going on with my kids and me not to be involved in it (school partner).*

### Training and preparation for delivery

We asked school FAST co-ordinators to rate how prepared they felt their school was to deliver FAST (taking into account training and any other support meetings they had had). As shown in Figure 7, the majority of those interviewed felt well prepared, and cited reasons that included supportive, informative, and thorough training, and that trainers used the training sessions for team-building—to ensure 'the team of local partners gelled' as one school FAST co-ordinator put it.

**Figure 7: Preparedness for delivering FAST**



Source: NFER School FAST co-ordinator telephone interviews (N=28).

Rating (1 = not at all prepared, 2 = not prepared, 3 = somewhat prepared, 4 = well prepared, 5 = very well prepared).

Training for FAST took place over two days, facilitated by SCUK trainers (as outlined previously in the section About the Intervention). The majority of partner interviewees felt the training had been thorough, high-quality and well-delivered by competent, highly skilled and motivated trainers. Partners felt equipped with understanding the theoretical underpinnings of FAST and what was required for effective delivery of the sessions. One school partner commented:

*There seemed to be a lot in the training but it was good to have all the background theories—making the parent not the child the focus—for us school partners, this was really useful as we would naturally want to go straight to the child before the parent (school partner).*

Many case-study interviewees, especially parent and community partners, noted being nervous and even overwhelmed on the first day of training. Several even suggested that they had seriously considered withdrawing from the programme after the first training session due to the amount of information to take in, and a realisation of what they were expected to do in the FAST sessions. That said, there was much positive feedback about how the trainers had encouraged and given confidence to the partners to help overcome their concerns.

*The training scared everybody to death—everybody who had not been in a classroom for a long time—by the end of day one they were saying they didn't think it was for them (FAST co-ordinator).*

*It wasn't anybody's fault, but the first training day was quite overwhelming. She was very good at explaining things but standing up and doing the song—obviously school staff are used to doing that, but us as community and parent partners, found it more difficult. I decided to stick with it—do the second day. The second day I felt a lot better (parent partner).*

Despite overall levels of satisfaction with the training and preparation, some concerns were expressed. A small number of FAST co-ordinators indicated that they did not feel prepared to deliver FAST following the training. Reasons for this included: not being given enough information at the outset about how much work was involved and the level of resources and support required from the school; the short turnaround time from the end of the training to the commencement of the programme; the training being 'too formulaic and prescriptive'; and being overly conceptual and theoretical with too little emphasis on the practical elements of FAST delivery. Several FAST co-ordinators also commented that their trainer did not engage particularly well with school staff and partners or did not fully understand school contexts.

### **Recruitment of families—Who are they, how are they recruited?**

FAST is a universal programme open to families with a child in Reception, Year 1, or Year 2. For the trial, the FAST programme focused on recruiting Year 1 children with delivery topped up with other year groups where needed. Although universal, some school FAST co-ordinators used informal targeting to recruit families that they thought would particularly benefit from the programme.

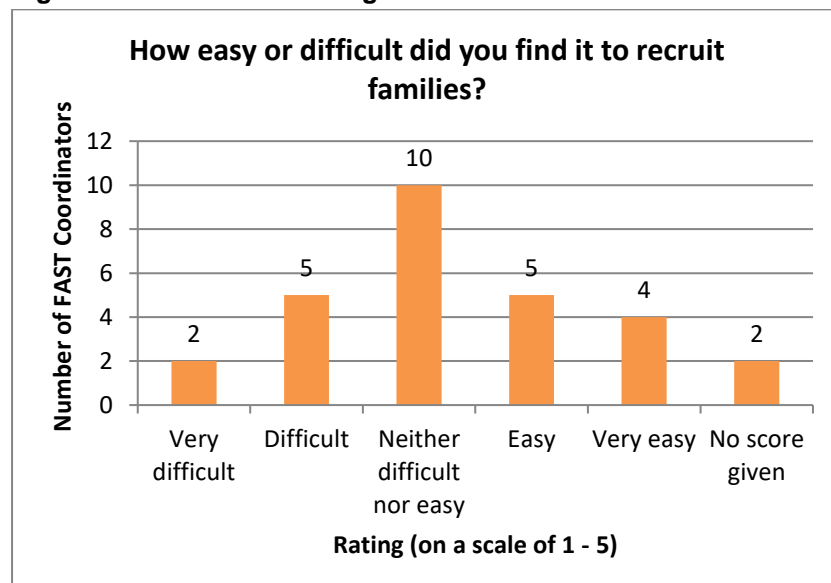
Families were recruited in a variety of ways, including informal coffee sessions where the programme was discussed, displays in and around school, information leaflets, articles in school newsletters, text messages and phone calls to parents, as well as direct communication with parents before and after school. In some cases, recruitment was particularly effective when one or more key families signed up to the programme and then acted as advocates to encourage others to participate. Some co-ordinators also noted that securing the enthusiasm of children, by explaining what FAST entailed, encouraged their parents to sign up to the programme. In several schools, recruitment increased after the first session when families fed back to others about the programme.<sup>23</sup> The following quotation illustrates how one FAST co-ordinator in a case-study school recruited families:

*Because I have a good relationship with parents, I sold it to them all individually. I did some follow up work to get more parents and used the parents who initially signed up to act as advocates to encourage other parents (FAST co-ordinator).*

<sup>23</sup> In these schools, FAST was essentially re-launched in a subsequent week, with the latest session becoming Week 1 for all families now involved.

Again, we asked FAST co-ordinators to rate how easy or difficult they found it to recruit families to the programme.

**Figure 8: Views on recruiting families**



Source: NFER School FAST co-ordinator telephone interviews (N=28).

Rating (1 = very difficult, 2 = difficult, 3 = neither difficult nor easy, 4 = easy, 5 = very easy).

As shown in Figure 8, FAST co-ordinators generally suggested that it was easier to recruit families than partners to the programme, although a number of challenges were encountered. Small schools, especially those with a one-form entry, found it difficult to meet the required number of families (see section on Fidelity). In addition, some sites found it difficult to meet the required threshold for the proportion of Year 1 children taking part in the eight-week programme compared with the total number of children in Year 1 (about one third was required for the FAST trial requirements—see Section on Methods: Sample Size; and dilution is further discussed in Fidelity and Limitations). The following comments from a FAST co-ordinator illustrate these issues:

*FAST [SCUK] were very concerned that we'd not got our 20 families—we thought we'd done really well considering we've only got 24 families to start with. Percentage wise we've done really well. FAST works on numbers not percentages and I think that is a little bit unfair—it penalises small schools (FAST co-ordinator).*

In addition, the recruitment window of around two to three weeks between the end of training and the commencement of the first FAST session was said to be difficult. This was related to the FAST trial design, which meant that FAST Phase 1 timescales were reduced to the minimum amount of time usually afforded to this phase of activity (training and recruitment) so that schools could complete their baseline trial data before Phase 1.

Other recruitment difficulties included finding parents who could attend the eight-week programme on a regular basis as childcare and work commitments often presented considerable barriers to participation. Some interviewees reported that a lack of understanding about the programme led to some parents being reluctant to sign up to FAST. In addition, cultural and language issues, including FAST sessions coinciding with community activities, such as after school religious activities, also presented recruitment difficulties in some areas.

Several FAST co-ordinators also noted that it was 'difficult to sell something you've not done before' and suggested that recruitment in future years would be easier (FAST co-ordinator).

## Engagement in and delivery of the eight-week programme

### *Family engagement in the eight-week programme<sup>24</sup>*

Most interviewees noted that families became more engaged in the programme as the weeks progressed, with the first couple of weeks being necessary for FAST to bed-in and families and partners to become accustomed to its requirements and understand what FAST was about. Interviewees generally reported high levels of positivity and parent commitment to the programme, as one FAST co-ordinator commented:

*Parents were absolutely, completely and utterly absorbed with the whole thing and there were lots of sighs of disappointment when it came to an end. There was lots of really positive feedback (FAST co-ordinator).*

One FAST co-ordinator reflected that, prior to starting FAST, the school had underestimated parents' resolve and levels of commitment. In the event, the skills, resilience and commitment demonstrated by parents indicated the extent to which they wanted to support their children.

Despite the overall high levels of engagement, a small number of drop-outs were recorded (see section on Fidelity). Families that withdrew tended to be those that had not engaged fully from the outset, or those where work or other external commitments prevented them from continuing. Language and communication issues caused several families to pull out of the programme, and in one case, the difficult relationships in one Hub (echoing relationships in the wider community) caused one family to withdraw.

Some barriers to engagement were also encountered. In one instance, for example, a small number of parents would not stop using their mobile phones during the sessions, even during Special Play. In this location, it was also reported that two parents in one Hub refused to go in a circle and participate in group activities which detracted from the experience of some other parents. The FAST co-ordinator noted that one parent's experience of FAST was significantly compromised by the actions of others:

*She would have loved to have been in the other Hub, how it was supposed to have been—she got very upset that people weren't doing it properly, that they weren't listening when other people were contributing (FAST co-ordinator).*

The FAST co-ordinator explained these engagement issues as arising from 'cultural differences and misunderstandings of expectations' as well as the presence of 'too many big characters' in that Hub.

### *Engaging, enjoyable, and challenging areas of the programme*

Stakeholders all identified various elements of FAST that were particularly engaging, effective and enjoyable. Key positive features included:

- the positive and affirmative nature of FAST;
- Parent Time, where parents could build relationships and support networks with other parents and discuss issues in a rare moment without children present;
- Special Play, which provided parents with dedicated one-to-one time with their child to build relationships; and
- the Family Meal, which was popular and enjoyable and gave parents a sense of pride and achievement after cooking for the Hub.

Some of these areas also gave rise to challenges. For example, the conceptual approach of FAST, which asks parents to put themselves first, having sufficient engaging activities for children whilst they

<sup>24</sup> Note, this section covers families' interest and engagement in the programme. The section on Fidelity provides actual figures on family attendance, graduation rates and drop-out rates.

were away from parents during Parent Time, feeling uncomfortable that Special Play focused on one child only, and for the Family Meal some logistical challenges associated with preparing meals.

Families tended to be less well engaged with Emotion Charades<sup>25</sup> as the weeks progressed, as it seemed repetitive, and Buddy Time<sup>26</sup> was one of the least popular activities as parents found it difficult to talk for the required length of time. Other challenges were noted including logistical challenges of space and rooms, lack of on-site catering facilities to prepare food, the perceived 'Americanisation' of the programme, and, for a few parent partners, a conflict in their role as a parent and as a partner.

The highlight box below provides further details from the case studies and telephone interviews on these key features and challenges.

### **Highlight box 1: Key enjoyable and challenging features of FAST**

#### **The conceptual approach of FAST**

The positive and inclusive atmosphere and approach of FAST, especially the affirmations, recognition, stickers and certificates, culminating in the graduation ceremony, were identified as being central to its effectiveness. One FAST co-ordinator commented:

*You could see that they'd never had nice things said to them before—they would go out beaming and smiling. One said, 'You don't need a drink after this because it makes you feel so good' (FAST co-ordinator).*

School, community partners, and some parent partners identified the conceptual approach of FAST as one of the most difficult elements of the programme for parents to comprehend, but also one of the most effective when they did understand and engage with it. Delivery partner interviewees said that it often took parents a long time to understand and accept the rationale behind FAST's approach, especially speaking to the parent first. However, when parents put the concept and philosophy into practice, they often noticed that they had 'taken back control' of their children (parent). One community partner noted that: 'Speaking to the parents first, before the child worked well. The parents recognised that they were important' (community partner).

Some delivery partners themselves also encountered similar challenges, especially during the early stages of the programme. One FAST co-ordinator stated that 'some school partners also found it difficult to leave the parents to parent especially when they were clearly doing it wrong' (FAST co-ordinator). School partners also found it difficult to respond to parents first, not the children, as they would do in their role as teachers, as noted by one interviewee:

*As a school partner, actually remembering to go to the parent first, and not the child as we would do in school [was an issue]. It got easier as time went on but initially it was against my instinct to go to the parent first (school partner).*

Some parents expressed concerns about the labelling/identification of one of their children as 'the FAST child' and there were also instances where some parents disagreed with the concept of their child serving them food during the meal. The following quotations illustrate these points in more detail:

*Parents didn't like it that the FAST child went to feed the parents first; especially if they had more than one child, [they] felt it wasn't fair on the other non-FAST children (school partner). When people from FAST UK came, they always talked about the children as the FAST Child. Our parents took a real dislike to that because if they'd brought four children, they wanted to be the family (FAST co-ordinator).*

#### **Parent Time**

Many parents really enjoyed FAST because of the opportunities for social interaction it provided. Parents valued spending time with other adults that they may, or may not, have recognised from the school or local community. FAST gave parents opportunities to build relationships and develop

<sup>25</sup> An activity involving cards, to help children and parents think about their emotions

<sup>26</sup> An activity solely for parents to speak to each other without prompts



friendship and support networks that might otherwise have not developed. These sessions provided parents with valuable time away from their children where they could have 'adult' conversations and helped them feel less isolated, often recognising that other parents were experiencing similar issues. In one case-study school, for example, one Hub contained three families who had children with autism. During the course of FAST, another family had a child diagnosed with the condition. The FAST co-ordinator said that the support and advice available to that family from other families was 'amazing' and may otherwise have not have been evident. One parent commented:

*The best thing about FAST is that it brings people together, speaking to people you wouldn't normally speak to, 'cos with half of them there's a language barrier (parent).*

Some difficulties associated with Parent Time were encountered, especially maintaining children's interest and engagement whilst they were away from their parents during this session. Several school partners noted that significant longer term planning was required for more structured activities for children during Parent Time, especially when older siblings were present.

### **Special Play**

Many interviewees said that Special Play was very effective in building relationships between parents and their children, allowing parents to see the difference that dedicated one-to-one time could have. As one parent commented:

*I enjoyed having the one-on-one time with my son. I'm a single parent with five so I don't get to do that otherwise. He really enjoyed that and I did too. He had a big smile on his face [during Special Play] (parent).*

*Spending time with my daughter and with other people. I don't get much time to spend with her at home as I've got three kids so have to divide my time between them. It's nice to come here and have one-to-one time with her and meet other parents (parent).*

However, some parents wanted all their children to experience Special Play as well which possibly impacted on the session's effectiveness, and in one case was the reason for a family withdrawing from the programme altogether.

### **Family Meal**

Many interviewees commented that, after some initial concerns and anxieties, the family meal activity was a very popular and enjoyable part of FAST which helped individual families and the Hubs to build relationships. Partners and parents reported a great sense of pride and achievement after cooking for the Hub, noting increased confidence afterwards. One parent partner commented:

*The meal was nice. When we did the training, I wasn't sure how well the parents would take to this. They were all a bit jittery, but people took a pride in it and it helped bring people together (parent partner).*

Despite overall successes, some logistical challenges were encountered in relation to the meal activity, including instances of parents repeatedly turning up with raw and uncooked food despite being informed of what was required of them several times.

### **(Other) challenges encountered during delivery**

Delivery partners and parents reported that some of the FAST activities were more challenging than others, especially in terms of keeping people interested and engaged. Although individuals all had their own perspectives, there was a general view that families tended to be less well engaged with Emotion Charades as the weeks progressed, often classing it as 'boring' and 'repetitive'. Similarly, interviewees noted that Buddy Time was one of the least popular activities as parents often could not talk for the required length of time and would have appreciated some guidance in terms of relevant topic areas to discuss. As one FAST co-ordinator commented:

*There needs to be some kind of prompt in Buddy Time. The [parents] just couldn't get it into their heads that it was a free conversation, they wanted clear instructions about what they were supposed to be talking about. They felt it was a waste of time. So a theme or starting point just at least to get a conversation going (FAST co-ordinator).*

Some parents and partners commented that the ‘Americanisation’ of the programme acted as a barrier to participation and some suggested that the FAST Song and FAST Hello did not translate well to their local contexts.

Other barriers and challenges experienced in delivering and participating in FAST were identified. Several case study FAST co-ordinators also noted that problems had arisen because of the conflicting interests and responsibilities of some partners during FAST sessions. This was particularly apparent when the partners’ own children were on site during a session and instances were reported when delivery partners prioritised parenting their own child over supporting the session. In one case-study location where a crèche was provided for the partner’s children, the FAST co-ordinator noted that one mum was ‘very split in her allegiance as to whether she was there as a FAST partner or as her children’s mum ... which made it more stressful than it needed to be’ (FAST co-ordinator). This interviewee noted that the demarcation of roles and responsibilities of partners was a key issue to consider in terms of recruitment, suggesting that: ‘If we were to run it again, I would be very mindful of which parents to approach to be partners’ (FAST co-ordinator).

In some schools, especially small ones, the availability of suitable spaces to run several FAST Hubs was challenging, and often entailed the use of classrooms. This often meant very tight turnaround times at the end of the school day to prepare for FAST and required more time at the end of the FAST session returning the classroom to its original state. Some FAST co-ordinators noted that they paid school support staff to help prepare rooms, but this also had a negative impact on other school colleagues: ‘We were taking over three classrooms in the school, which meant that three teachers couldn’t continue working in their room after school’ (FAST co-ordinator).

Several FAST co-ordinators also mentioned other logistical challenges, such as the lack of catering facilities to prepare food and the lack of suitable equipment, such as chairs for adults. In addition, late recruits to the programme caused some operational difficulties, as one community partner noted:

*During the first three weeks there were still parents joining the programme, so there was some disruption where we had to go back to basics, like flag making. We had to switch between new families doing the flags as well as doing things for the other families. Juggling that time was challenging (community partner).*

Various operational challenges were noted by case-study and telephone interviewees, including managing the dynamics of Hubs—especially when there were one or more vociferous participants, and managing the behaviour of children during parent time, especially when there were a large number of siblings of mixed ages present. One FAST co-ordinator noted that the rigid nature of the programme caused difficulties when a sickness bug drastically reduced attendance for one week which could not be rescheduled.

## Implementing FASTworks

FASTworks is a period of 22 months after the eight-week programme where families can continue to meet on a regular basis, with sessions led by the parents themselves. The school is encouraged to take a ‘back seat’ and each site is encouraged to identify a parent lead or leads to maintain the group.

FASTworks was taken up in varying degrees and nature across the intervention sites. At the time of the initial case studies (immediately or shortly after the eight-week programme) most of the parents interviewed in the case-study locations were keen to participate in FASTworks. In several sites, parents had started to meet during the holidays and were developing plans for activities for the following term based on the FAST format but tailored to their interests:

*The parents loved it. We have a hall [community hall] organised for FASTworks. We want to do fundraising. I have been asked to be involved to support them (community partner).*

Where FASTworks was taken up, activities included trips to local parks, soft play centres, picnics, and going to the pantomime, a bowling alley, and local visitor attractions. A camping trip was held by one group. Activities, hosted, for example, in the school or community hall venue (rarer), included seasonal

craft activities, coffee mornings and social events, games sessions, and cooking/baking sessions. The majority of activities were for the whole family, although in a few cases, FASTworks meetings were just for parents who undertook family activities at home then discussed them in subsequent parent-only meetings.

One of the case-study schools had introduced an amended version of FAST during the FASTworks period. The altered version included families making healthy snacks for the group rather than a meal and distributing hampers at graduation rather than on a weekly basis. They continued with the scribble time and the feeling charades but dropped the 'hello song'. It was delivered on school premises and funded by the school.

Whilst a small number of parent groups had clearly undertaken considerable activity during FASTworks (one school reported that the parents had met 32 times and listed a vast range of activities), it was apparent from the data that many sites had not taken up FASTworks or had started but discontinued due to low take up. Indeed, all follow-up case study schools and parents reported challenges with FASTworks. The main barrier to implementing and delivering FASTworks was a lack of guidance and support for parents in terms of setting up this aspect of the programme and ensuring its continued delivery. Schools were encouraged to 'take a back seat' and, without assistance from schools, parents found FASTworks a difficult element of the programme to implement. Furthermore, without formal support or guidance from trainers or Programmes Managers (as they had been used to for the previous parts of the programme), schools and parents found it difficult to maintain momentum from FAST into FASTworks (despite FASTworks briefing sessions with trainers in most schools). SCUK staff commented that so much effort and focus goes into the FAST programme during Phases 1 and 2—in particular to support schools through the programme to graduation—that FASTworks does not receive the up-front attention it perhaps needs.

Agreeing on dates for activities was also a challenge, for example dates were difficult to organise where FASTworks was a one-off event (such as a weekend camping trip) or a few events over a year rather than weekly events. In addition, there were difficulties with participants (parents and schools) agreeing on the types of activities to fund with the FASTworks budget—whether relating to one big event or smaller events over a longer period. In some instances the financial circumstances of parents resulted in these disagreements. In one school there were issues around not all families getting along which made it difficult to organise FASTworks due to relationship clashes. Another factor was that parents had other commitments (such as work or child care) that often took precedence and impacted on them continuing with FASTworks. One school reported that it was difficult to recruit parents into FASTworks.

*Have a Facebook group [for parents] but not really used... fizzled out after six months. Used it to chat and arrange things but it didn't happen. People have busy lives (parent, follow-up)*

The section on Fidelity provides further information about actual FASTworks take up.

## Fidelity

This section covers both implementation fidelity (Was the intervention *delivered* as intended to all intervention schools?) and participation fidelity (Did participants graduate from FAST and continue to meet as part of FASTworks?). (Note the latter were the two main compliance indicators for the trial.) It explores any issues with overall compliance/fidelity and why these occurred, and explores examples of adaptations and the reasons for these.

## Overall implementation and participation fidelity (compliance)

**Table 22: Compliance and fidelity ‘indicators’**

Indicator	No. of schools
<b>School engagement rates</b>	
No. of schools completing the eight-week programme with Y1s	62
No. of schools completing the eight-week programme with incorrect year group	1
No. of schools that cancelled the programme	16
<b>No. of Hubs</b>	
Schools with 3 Hubs	7
Schools with 2 Hubs	42
Schools with 1 Hub (not usually run)	14
<b>Family Registration and Graduation numbers</b>	
Total no. of FAST families (i.e. FAST children in various year groups) taking part	955
Total no. of FAST families graduating (i.e. attended six or more sessions)	752
Number of FAST Y1 children consented for NFER to use their data	632
Number of consented FAST Y1 children graduating	525
<b>FASTworks compliance</b>	
Families that met relatively regularly (for example once a month) over a period of time (for example for three or four months) during FASTworks	22
Families that started FASTworks but discontinued due to low uptake (and insufficient data to say whether regular activity resumed)	11
Families that did not take part in any FASTworks activity	11
No data supplied on FASTworks	35
<b>Dilution</b>	
Total no. of Y1s in intervention schools	3482
Dilution (i.e. proportion of FAST Y1s : whole year group Y1s)	18%
<b>Repeat cycles</b>	
No. of schools running FAST again during the trial period	9

Sources: SCUK FAST Family Register, NFER FASTworks end-point pro-forma and SCUK FASTworks audit.

As outlined in Table 22 above, of the 79 intervention schools, **16 cancelled the programme** prior to starting it (roughly 20%, which, according to SCUK, is similar to or better than real-world cancellation rates, although SCUK records are based on cancellation at any point in the sign-up process including prior to signing an Agreement). Reasons included: other school priorities, unable to recruit sufficient local partners, no longer able to commit time to the programme (for example for training). In addition, the majority of cancellations (ten) occurred with schools randomised in Block 3 and that had deferred from recruitment in previous blocks (that is, they were schools at risk of cancellation due to uncertain starts). In hindsight, recruiting further schools to mitigate potential cancellations could have been beneficial. (See section on Limitations.)

**Programme compliance in Phase 1** (the set up phase) **includes training the correct number of local partners**—a minimum of four per Hub—ideally entailing one staff partner, two to three parent partners (minimum one) and two community partners (minimum one) per Hub per school. As discussed

in the Section on Implementation, recruiting community partners in particular was a challenge for some schools for reasons relating to potential community partners being unable to give the time and local employers being unable to release staff. Indeed a small number of schools did not recruit and train sufficient community partners. However, it was decided by SCUK that as these schools were keen to continue with FAST they could supplement their local partner teams with more parent or staff partners where needed; or reduce the number of Hubs they could facilitate.

**Compliance in Phase 1 also includes facilitating the programme with two or more hubs** (sites with one Hub are not seen to be sufficiently efficient by SCUK to run FAST). However, for the trial 14 schools ran with one Hub (in order to stay in the trial). One Hub sites were generally due to smaller schools not being able to recruit enough families from Year 1 (or other years) to run two hubs; and in some cases to insufficient community partners being recruited (see above). Reasons included SCUK Programmes Managers and trainers working at scale and full capacity in this trial and so limited in being able to offer additional support to schools for family recruitment; schools in term three could not defer delivery in order to recruit more families or bigger teams; and the changing face of the voluntary sector. This latter issue was felt by SCUK and by school FAST co-ordinators to have had a big impact on FAST in terms of community partners being available or able to give up their time for FAST.

**Compliance in Phase 2** (the eight-week FAST programme) **focuses on the number of sessions families attend**—six or more sessions means families ‘graduate’ and are said to have completed the programme. As shown in Table IPE 4, around 79% (752/955) of families taking part in FAST graduated; and similarly around 83% of the identified and consented Y1 families graduated (525/632). According to SCUK, this reflects real-world graduation rates. As discussed in the section on Implementation, reasons for individual family ‘drop out’ included other commitments and in some cases strained relationships between group members.

**During FASTworks** there are no standard compliance measures used for the programme as it currently runs in the UK. The original planned fidelity measures for the trial were the number of times parents met during FASTworks, and some qualitative exploration of the nature of meetings/activities. However, due to low participation in FASTworks and poor data recording by families, we revised the data collection approach to collect overall family involvement in FASTworks direct from schools. For the trial, we took compliance to mean, ‘families continued to meet regularly over a period of time during the FASTworks period’. From the data we and SCUK were able to collect, it would seem FASTworks fidelity was limited. In 22 schools, regular FASTworks activity was recorded, involving either ‘most’ or ‘some’ of the families meeting on a monthly basis or less often (although three schools reported families meeting more often, and one Block 1 school held as many as 32 FASTworks meetings). In the main, meetings comprised FAST parents and children, rather than the wider family. In two FASTWorks groups, just the parents met (without children). A further 11 schools provided at least some information about FASTworks activities, including that they had tried a few sessions and then stopped due to limited take-up. Some had intentions of re-launching FASTworks, but there was insufficient information to say whether regular meetings had occurred. Indeed, over half of the schools provided either no or insufficient data to say whether FASTworks had happened. (The section on Implementation provides some examples of the FASTworks activities undertaken.)

In addition to programme and participation compliance indicators outlined above, **the trial required one-third of Year 1s** to take part in FAST in each school (in order to support the dilution effect) and this was agreed as part of the trial protocol. In practice however, it was a challenge for schools to recruit at this level, and many schools boosted their family recruitment with Reception and Year 2 children. This means the dilution effect is increased, and hence the MDES calculated for the trial is slightly underpowered (see the sections on Methods and Limitations). Note also, one school delivered the entire intervention to the wrong year group (Reception)—it appears they misunderstood the instructions for the trial.

SCUK also recorded **which schools delivered FAST again** (known as **repeat cycles**) during the trial period. Nine schools did this, and seven of the families appearing on the Family Register across these nine schools appeared to be undertaking FAST with another child as the FAST child. This means that seven of our FAST children will have been exposed to the FAST programme again during the trial period, but as a sibling rather than the FAST child. We agreed to flag these schools in the impact and CACE analysis in case further, but more limited exposure had any bearing on impact. The percentage of RCT schools taking part in repeat cycles (14%) is lower than SCUK's average (about 38% of non RCT schools in the same period, or 31% since FAST delivery started with SCUK). Anecdotally, schools that took part in repeat cycles did so because they had had a very positive experience of the programme and wanted to build on it further. Some schools expressed interest in taking part again, but in the event did not go ahead with a repeat cycle for reasons that included the school FAST co-ordinator leaving the school or being unable at the time to commit to the work involved.

### **Adaptations and reasons**

Some minor and usually acceptable adaptations were made to the programme amongst our observation, case-study and telephone interview schools. FAST sites made slight adaptations to the training timetable, the FAST meal, the timings of sessions, and the materials for the activities (making the emotional charades pictures bigger). On rare occasions, FAST sites made more substantial deviations from the prescribed manual (equating to non-adherence) for example to Special Play and Table Based Coaching. These are set out in the highlight box below. Note, we do not know how widespread such adaptations or deviations were across the whole sample—these are single examples from those involved in the case studies and interviews.

#### **Highlight box 2**

##### **Adaptations: some examples from the case studies and telephone interview schools**

#### **Training—timetable, session and hub adjustments**

In one of our training-observation schools the timetable was changed slightly for the training days. This was due to severe disruptions on public transport on day one and so the session started late and some items (Buddy time, Parent Group, and Special Play) had to be moved to day two. On day two in this school, the trainer and group reported that they managed to cover everything without rushing too much. In addition to this, the trainer reported that the room was much smaller than the rooms she normally trains in (although she was warned before she arrived at the school), and this didn't allow her to do the usual ice breaking activity. This was not felt to be too much of a problem as there was already another ice-breaker in the session where participants introduced themselves. In another school two crucial participants (the community partners) did not attend the day two training session, so the session was rearranged to allow participants in attendance to continue to train whilst the trainer contacted SCUK to agree a way to proceed. In the end the decision was made to go ahead as one hub instead of two and the training was completed despite some changes to the order of activities.

#### **The FAST meal—adaptations to hosting and serving**

One of the activities in each FAST session is the Family Meal. Each week a different family shops for and prepares the meal. For the first week the team of local FAST partners prepares the meal but for the remaining weeks the families take turns. In one school the FAST school partners cooked the meals for the first three weeks because parents were bringing raw ingredients with the expectation of cooking the food from scratch on the school premises. Unfortunately this was too time consuming and disruptive and so parents were asked to prepare the food at home and just heat it up at the session. After three weeks parents followed this instruction. The Family Meal is based on research that shows benefits of families who eat together. Preparing the meal empowers the parents, and re-establishes them being in charge of their family. This departure still allowed families to eat together but some families may have missed out on the experience of completely hosting the meal. In another school the parents did not like the idea of the child serving them the food so families went up as a unit to collect their food instead of getting the child to do it as prescribed. In this school, the child led the tidying up, so the child still experienced involvement in an important aspect of the mealtime.

**Time—adaptations to timings and lengths of sessions**

A few case-study schools adapted the length and timing of the FAST session in order to accommodate other commitments. Examples of this were to allow families to finish in time to attend a bonfire night celebration and a parents' evening. These schools reported that they made the FAST session shorter by around 15–20 minutes but still included all of the core elements. Another school reported lengthening the time within each FAST session for the meal. Parents felt that 20 minutes was not enough time for food so the local FAST team extended it to 30 minutes still allowing enough time for the other activities by making them slightly shorter. These changes in the timings of sessions appear to be minor or only occasional necessary departure.

**Resources—larger formats**

One school made the emotional charades bigger on the photocopier and reported that they worked better/were easier to use in larger format. This seems to have been a helpful departure.

**Special Play—included all children in one school**

Deviation from the FAST manual was made in one case-study school to Special Play. Special Play is an activity where the parent spends 15 minutes with the nominated FAST child on a one-to-one basis allowing the child to lead the play. Parents are asked to continue this at home for 15 minutes a day. One case-study site did Special Play with a different child each week. Parents at this school reported that they did not like having to choose just one child for Special Play. Although the FAST trainer strongly insisted that it should be with the FAST child, the local FAST team allowed them to do Special Play with a different child each week. The manual states that FAST will not work if this element of the programme is left out. It is not clear what impact there would be if the parents switched between the children each week. At the very least the effect on the FAST child could be diluted.

**Buddy Time—prompts from the local partners**

In one school the Fast partners made changes to the Buddy Time activity by giving parents prompts. They observed that parents were struggling with speaking for 7.5 minutes each and so tried to facilitate the activity. As prompts, partners suggested topics to talk about, for example holidays. The FAST manual states that parents should use Buddy Time to talk about their day in detail and any issues they had. The FAST team were not supposed to prompt, but this happened in this school when parents had run out of things to say. Whilst on the one hand this may have been a reasonable response to the situation, it meant Buddy Time was done differently in this school from the prescribed instructions in the manual.

**Table Based Coaching—quiet instructions not given**

In one school, the school partners did not like to whisper in the parents ears during Table Based Coaching—they did not feel comfortable doing this, and so did not do it. The idea of Table Based Coaching is that by giving quiet instruction to the parents individually at each table the power lies with the parent rather than with the facilitator. Hence in this school the parents did not fully experience this aspect of FAST, and no table-based coaching is considered deviation from the manual.

The FAST programme manual states that adherence to the processes of the activities is important and following the activities as prescribed in sequence every week helps to achieve the intended outcomes. It states that even small well-intentioned deviations can significantly reduce the effectiveness of the programme. Adaptable aspects are the children's activities in Kids Time where any supervised activity is permitted and the flexibility of the FASTworks programme where topics and activities are not prescribed. The other activities are all based on scientific theory and have been carefully designed and researched. It was said in the training observed that small changes to these can reduce the effectiveness of the programme and even invalidate that particular activity. Responding to this, some of the partners leading the sessions, and to some extent the FAST family parents we spoke to, found the programme somewhat inflexible. On the other hand, some parents, and to some extent the partners, believed that more flexibility was allowed than was really permissible.

In summary, examples from the case study and interview schools show that some schools made adaptations which altered participants' experiences from the 'norm'. That said, it seems that these changes were on the whole made to improve the experience for participants and therefore reflect the real-world running of the programme. Therefore, whilst we must take into account that not every school

ran the programme exactly as intended, the evaluation does seem to capture the real-life running of FAST. The section on Formative Findings provides some examples of where participants would like a little more flexibility.

## Perceived outcomes

This section considers the programme's perceived outcomes for children, parents and schools—both in the immediate term (straight after the eight-week programme) and longer-term (one year on from the eight-week programme), and discusses any unintended and negative outcomes highlighted by interviewees.

### Perceived outcomes for children

All of the **immediate outcomes for children** focused on the FAST children, rather than the wider year group. Perceived immediate outcomes included:

- **Enhanced relationships and behaviours**—particularly between the FAST child and his/her parents and family members. The engagement between adults and children that was nurtured by FAST, particularly during Special Play, was felt to have had a positive impact on the relationships between the children and their parents. As was noted by one school representative, 'It was lovely to watch their relationships with their children grow' because they had spent time with each other without interruptions.
- **Improved routines at home**—particularly **meal times**, as parents explained that they had transferred their experiences from the FAST programme to their child's home life. Children became more settled at mealtimes because families had created routines which meant that they took their meals together and avoided distractions that might take children away from the table. In turn, this reinforced positive mealtime activity during FAST sessions themselves. School respondents reported that by the end of the programme children were more likely to sit at the table for the duration of the family meal, whereas at the start many of them walked around when the meals were being eaten.

Furthermore, the programme had **introduced children to a broader range of foods** because they had the opportunity of eating what had been prepared for them by other members of their group. As a result, children were felt to have developed better eating habits: they were eating a greater variety of food and were more willing to try new food.

In terms of play, parents explained that the kind of approaches which were evident in the Special Play element of FAST had been used at home and that their **children had played new games with their parents at home** after they had learned them during the programme.

- **Enhanced engagement with school and learning**—in particular that the FAST children were more punctual, behaved more appropriately in school, and were more confident about learning.

One year on, longer-term outcomes for the FAST children emphasised a continuation, particularly of the first two of these immediate outcomes, as evidenced by:

- **Further improved relationships and behaviour**—including children being less argumentative, and children and parents speaking and 'chatting' together more often. Parents had higher expectations of their children upon seeing how children behaved when participating in the FAST programme, and they felt their children had risen to this.

*Our relationship has improved a little, her behaviour has improved a lot... before she was always constantly pushing the boundaries and I was struggling a bit... Our relationship helped having the one-to-one (parent, follow-up).*

- **Continued improvements to home routines**—this was particularly emphasised in the longer-term. Examples included children helping to make lunch or dinner, setting the table ready for evening meals or clearing the table at the end. Parents also reported that they had continued to spend more time with their child(ren), without interruptions, one year on from FAST including doing arts and crafts at home with their child(ren) and taking the time to talk to their child(ren)



about their day at school (indicating that families had continued to undertake FAST activities such as 'table time' and 'family communication' exercises at home).

*Before FAST I did not realise how little attention I paid to the kids* (parent, follow-up).

*He would never tell me what he liked at school before but now he does. We try to spend more one-to-one time together* (parent, follow-up).

- **Improved behaviour for FAST children within the school setting**—noted by parents, teachers and FAST co-ordinators (see below). FAST children were said to be calmer, more focused, have more patience, and be respectful of others in the classroom. In addition, one parent explained how her son finished his homework now whereas previously it had been a challenge to convince him to complete it. She attributed this to FAST teaching him to concentrate for periods of time. Similarly one of the teachers interviewed reported that the children were more willing to complete their homework since participating in FAST.

*Some are much more confident. A lot were reserved. Much more positive about coming into school. More engaged and they have a smile on their face. [They] enjoy school* (Year 1 teacher, follow-up).

We also explored whether there were **any perceived longer-term knock-on impacts for other children in FAST schools, particularly on the whole year group** (by now in Year 2) in terms of their behaviour and learning. Most interviewees did not perceive FAST to have improved the learning or educational outcomes in terms of reading, writing and maths with regards to the FAST children or the wider Year 2 group, or they felt it was too early to comment. Indeed, many teacher and school co-ordinator interviewees could not unpack any link between FAST and knock-on to the wider group. Exploring this from another angle, the small number of Year 2 teachers we spoke to felt that their Year 2 class was similar to any other Year 2 class they may have had in terms of behaviour and learning. However, one FAST co-ordinator reported that her class had received the best Year 1 phonic results and she felt that FAST had contributed to this. In addition one teacher reported that the Year 2 class as a whole appeared to have more respect for one another and patience.

### Perceived outcomes for parents

Some of the immediate outcomes for FAST parents mirrored those reported for children, in terms of home routines, whilst others reflected better relationships between FAST parents and the school. Again, immediate outcomes focused on the FAST parents, rather than the wider parent community, and included:

- **Enhanced approaches to parenting**—including encouraging parents to think more about their own behaviours and those of their children and instigating more structured routines at mealtimes and bedtimes. Parents reported that they and their children had adapted quickly to their new routines. This had helped those families to establish a calmer atmosphere and to earmark time to spend together.
- **New friendships among parents**—some of whom had been somewhat isolated in the past, or were new to the particular locality. Some of those taking part had taken a break from their normal routines which had enabled them to spend time with other adults and some had formed friendships outside their normal friendship groups.
- **A sense of achievement and feeling valued**—engendered in particular through the celebratory graduation event, and also through cooking the Family Meal—there was a sense of pride in taking part.
- **Confidence to join further activities**—parents felt they would be more inclined to join in other activities, such as FASTworks and to interact more with other parents. Moreover, several parents actively expressed an interest in **becoming parent or community partners** if FAST were to operate again in the future, and several FAST co-ordinators were keen to identify and encourage particular parents who would personally benefit from being a partner in future, as well as being able to make significant contributions to the programme.

- **Better relationships between parents and the school**—including that parents were more likely to come in to school to talk to members of staff to discuss issues affecting their child(ren), and that they were more confident to do so (rather than being ‘shy’ or ‘retiring’). Parents and teachers saw each other in a different light after participating in the FAST programme because they had met in a more informal context than usual.
- **Increased engagement in the life of the school**—for example, attending other school events and parents’ evenings, including for some families who had previously rarely engaged with the school.

Longer-term outcomes for parents mirrored those from the shorter-term, and in some cases extended more widely to other parents particularly in terms of parental engagement with school (see outcomes for schools). Conversely, some outcomes were not maintained as strongly in the longer term, as outlined below:

- **Enhanced social networks**—FAST parents reported increased confidence to approach other parents at the school, and that they now knew a greater number of parents. Some continued to meet at each other’s houses for dinner, children’s play dates and birthday parties. In one case, a parent was offering childcare support to another so that she could gain employment.

*FAST has brought parents together. They talk and chat to each other and some never had this before (Year 1 teacher, follow-up).*

*One mum was quite isolated, no-one spoke to her, but now she is friends with lots of other mums (FAST co-ordinator, follow-up).*

However, for some parents maintaining friendships proved to be difficult once the eight-week FAST programme had finished.

- **Increased parental engagement with school**—FAST parents found it easier now to approach and interact with teachers in their school. Some also engaged more widely in other school activities, including volunteering for the Parent Teacher Association and at school events such as school discos, fundraising events, supervising at break times and coffee mornings.

*They can relate to the staff better. See them as people and not just teachers (FAST co-ordinator, follow-up).*

*They ask for help now instead of dealing with things by themselves. FAST has showed them that they are not on their own and that the teachers are here to support them (Year 1 teacher, follow-up).*

- **Increased involvement with their child’s learning**—parents reported being more interested in their child’s learning and in particular the homework that their child had been set, indicating that FAST had helped parents get more involved in their child’s education. One FAST co-ordinator also revealed that all of the parents that took part in FAST attended parents’ evening that year whereas in the previous year attendance had been more limited.

*They are more engaged. They ask questions about homework now. They read at home [with their children] now and are doing homework with their children... They understand why it is important for their children to do their homework (Year 2 teacher, follow-up).*

### Perceived outcomes for schools

Outcomes for schools focused around enhanced capacity for parental engagement. In the immediate term, this was discussed as:

- **Developing the skills to engage parents** and to encourage them to become involved in school life. For some interviewees this was something that built on existing engagement work, often led by family engagement practitioners, whereas for others it was adding a new dimension to the way they interacted with parents.
- **Increased understanding and confidence of how to run a family engagement programme**, including the commitment and resources that would be required to do so

effectively. Few of them had done so before and it had been a steep learning curve for them. Most said that they would be confident to deliver this type of programme in future.

In the longer-term, there were some interesting examples of schools building capacity for parental engagement and for strategies in their classrooms. These included:

- **Greater engagement with parents that did not attend FAST**—suggesting that teachers who took part in the programme were more likely to attempt to engage with all parents now. In one school they now held ‘drop in sessions’ once a month for parents and the occasional coffee morning; another school was exploring methods to engage parents more; and another school was re-launching the parents’ council with a focus on parental engagement and to be parent led.

*I think it is having a knock- on effect on parental engagement... Goals were set to build a rapport with the family, which has a knock- on effect here. (FAST co-ordinator, follow-up).*

That said, some school co-ordinators recognised that some of the parents who had engaged had not sustained the contact after the eight-week programme and a minority of schools said that they were struggling with parental engagement once again after the programme had come to an end.

- **Enhanced behavioural strategies in the classroom**—one teacher revealed that she continued to use the strategies she learned at FAST in her classroom such as ‘five minute reward time’ and lots of praise reflecting that the children responded better to positive reinforcement rather than negative.

## Negative and unintended outcomes

Very few negative outcomes were reported by respondents in relation to the FAST programme. According to a minority of schools the FAST leaflet had been misinterpreted by some as suggesting that they were poor or inadequate parents, which schools felt had done little to promote their self-esteem. Others referred to negative reactions to the ‘rigid’ approaches adopted by some FAST trainers. In other cases some parents in some of the groups were felt to have been overbearing, something which had overshadowed what had otherwise been a positive experience. In the longer-term, in some cases, strained relationships had made it difficult to continue with FASTworks without excluding a parent or parents.

## Formative findings

This section presents formative findings in terms of what aspects of the FAST programme participants, school FAST co-ordinators, school senior leaders and SCUK staff felt could be improved. Suggestions focused around the following key areas:

- **Better information about what is required in setting up and delivering FAST during the recruitment stage.** FAST co-ordinators particularly wanted more information about the amount of work that setting up and delivering FAST entailed. Improvements suggested included bringing in outside people to deliver FAST and making sure school staff are fully aware of the amount of time and work that is required to deliver the FAST programme, including developing a timetable that would detail both set-up and delivery timeframes for FAST.
- **More training**—both in terms of more time on particular aspects such as practicing table-coaching skills, and more time overall. FAST co-ordinators felt that two days of training was not sufficient for partners to glean all of the information and skills required. One co-ordinator suggested a run-through directly prior to the first FAST session would be helpful; two co-ordinators suggested a ‘buddy-up’ system, whereby schools currently delivering FAST link with schools that have already delivered FAST, for advice and support. One co-ordinator suggested the element on safeguarding training could be reduced, as all school staff are already trained in this area. However, SCUK have a particular remit for safeguarding across all of their programmes and it may be that this aspect cannot be reduced.

- **Greater variety of activities** for children and their parents to ensure that they do not become repetitive—especially the Emotional Charades activity which used the same resource prompts each week, which parents and partners found a little ‘boring’.
- **Reduce the ‘Americanised’ aspects of the programme** particularly the FAST song, and adapt other aspects for different cultures as needed (some of the intervention schools were in high ethnic minority areas). One FAST co-ordinator noted that they planned to change what they perceive to be ‘American’ aspects for subsequent year’s delivery.
- **Reduce the programme evaluation requirements**—particularly the parent-completed SDQs administered as part of the programme (not the RCT evaluation). Some co-ordinators felt that there were too many questions and that some parents found the surveys hard to complete (and, as it was self-completion staff were unable to help).
- **Better support and guidance for FASTworks**—including promoting it at the start of the programme and building momentum towards it during the eight-week programme, as well as the need for documented guidance and ongoing FAST trainer support to schools and parent groups.

Several co-ordinators also commented that they would have liked more flexibility regarding delivery dates—such as delivering in the spring term rather than at the start of the school year—and more time to engage parents in the programme (this element was shortened from the usual amount of time by a week or so). These issues were, however, trial related rather than FAST programme related and would not be an issue in the real world (unless donor funding meant schools could only take up delivery in a term that did not suit them).

### Other intervention and control group activity

We asked intervention and control group schools to tell us about any other parental engagement or family support programmes they had engaged with during the trial period.

Twelve out of the 22 intervention schools that completed the end-point pro-forma provided details of parenting programmes on offer, in addition to FAST. The number of programmes offered in each school ranged from one to nine, although some of these were the same programme repeated at different times across the year. Programmes included numeracy and literacy focused courses and sessions, such as Fun with Maths, Family English, assessment (SATs) workshops, and Family Learning as well as one-off curriculum support sessions for parents. Other programmes included preparation for transition to nursery, cooking and healthy eating courses and family-focused sessions or parent nurturing and mentoring programmes such as Family Links and FAST repeat cycle 2. Several courses designed to help parents struggling with challenging behaviour were also offered, as well as courses designed mainly for parents, such as Promoting Happy Parenting.

The majority of programmes and interventions were universal and open to all, although tailored to specific age-related cohorts where appropriate—such as transition to nursery programmes only being delivered to the youngest children. In one instance, a course was targeted at families identified by social care professionals as being in particular need of support.

Twenty out of the 48 control schools that completed the end-point pro-forma offered between one and 13 parenting programmes during the trial period, again with some individual programmes running more than once per year. These schools offered a similar range of programmes to those provided by intervention schools and included those designed to support parents’ involvement in their children’s learning, language skills for parents (where English was not their first language), and literacy and numeracy courses for children and their parents (family learning). Programmes focusing on confidence-building and behaviour management were also available. Most programmes were universal or open to the whole class, although some programmes, such as ‘Being a Parent’ were targeted at families identified by social care and other agencies, working in partnership with the schools, as requiring specific support.

Although not all schools provided data on the end-point pro-forma, the range and types of parenting programmes schools engaged with in the intervention and control schools was similar—indicating no ‘resentful demoralisation’ or ‘over-compensation’ by control schools for not having received FAST. What is perhaps most interesting is that intervention schools continued to undertake other family engagement initiatives, even during the trial period, despite the intensity of the FAST programme.

## Conclusion

### Key conclusions

1. There was no evidence that FAST had an impact on Key Stage 1 outcomes for the whole year group.
2. There was also no evidence that FAST had an impact on Key Stage 1 outcomes for the FAST 'target' pupils' (the children whose families signed up to the eight-week programme).
3. Year 1 pupils in the FAST schools had a higher average prosocial score and a lower average total difficulties score than pupils in control schools in the period immediately after the eight-week programme. By the end of Year 2, these effects had waned.
4. Schools generally engaged positively with the FAST programme and felt well prepared to deliver FAST. However, they found that recruiting local partners was a challenge, particularly community partners, due to the time commitments required. Recruitment of families was most successful where schools engaged more active parents as advocates to help encourage others to join. Schools and partners wanted better information on programme requirements and wanted the training (which was generally highly regarded) to include more time for practice sessions.
5. The self-reported capacity for schools and parents to engage was enhanced both in the immediate and longer-term for the FAST parents. However, the success of maintaining the parent group (through FASTworks) or benefiting parents and children in the wider year group was more limited.

## Interpretation

### Primary outcome

The FAST intervention had no effect on the whole cohort's attainment at Key Stage 1 (that is, one year on from the intervention). FAST also had no impact on Key Stage 1 outcomes for everFSM children; when comparing Key Stage 1 outcomes of everFSM children in the intervention group with those in the control group, there was no difference. Due to the large amount of attrition observed in this trial, and potentially biased dropped out, a multilevel multiple imputation model with 40 iterations was run in order to further explore any effect: there was no evidence of an effect on the main conclusion. In addition, a model using the results from KS1 assessments in the form of combined age-related expectations (AREs) for reading and maths, with 6,783 observations and only 5.9% pupil-level attrition, also found no evidence of a difference between the intervention and control groups. The primary outcome analysis was based on the hypothesis that there is a spill-over effect from the FAST target group into the classroom and on learning for the whole class/wider year group. This diluted 'exposure' meant that the trial was designed for about one-third of Year 1s to take part in FAST in each school. In total, 18% of Year 1s in the trial took part in FAST, making the intervention more 'dilute' in practice for the whole year group (see Limitations below). It may therefore be that the experiment was too dilute to detect any effect.

However, there was also no effect on Key Stage 1 outcomes of just the FAST 'target' group when compared to the control. Although this result is not causal as it is not based on randomisation, it suggests that the theory of change whereby FAST impacts on attainment—at least in the short to medium term—is not strong enough to see in practice. Although the FAST programme encourages good home routines around mealtimes, bedtimes and homework for example, it does not specifically focus on learning either in the classroom or at home such as parents reading with their children. Instead, the FAST programme aims to enhance the school classroom environment through impacting on FAST children's behaviour, thus freeing up the teacher to focus on learning for the benefit of the whole class. Indeed, in the process evaluation, school interviewees could not identify spill-over into improved learning in the classroom for the whole year group, or for individual FAST children (aside from a few anecdotal examples). These findings reflect some of the evidence in the EEF toolkit, whereby parental

engagement strategies appear to need to have a stronger focus on children's learning to impact on attainment (for example, Husain *et al.*, 2016; Dorsett *et al.*, 2014).

It could also be that the timescale for observing any attainment outcomes was too short (for example, Macdonald *et al.*, 2006, found that teachers rated FAST pupils more highly on academic attainment compared to a non-intervention group, but this was two years after the eight-week programme, and used teacher report only). The theory of change for FAST in the U.S.A. certainly highlights a much longer-term process of 'school turn-around' with FASTworks and repeat FAST cycles playing a bigger part of the picture than observed here (Spier and Bos, 2015). Wider evidence on parental engagement emphasises the importance of what happens in the home (Melhuish, 2010), but also that initiatives such as FAST need to be embedded in school systems to be fully effective (Banerjee *et al.*, 2016).

The CACE analysis arguably gave the best chance to discern whether an intensive bout of FAST led to changes in attainment. The results, though not strictly causal in nature, were clearly null for both the continuous and dichotomous measures of dosage (that is, the number of sessions a child attended in the eight-week programme, and whether or not they graduated—that is, attended six or more sessions). This backs up the findings of the quasi-experimental analysis described above.

This study aimed to fill the evidence gap for FAST on attainment by exploring the impacts on children's Key Stage 1 outcomes (reading and arithmetic) but found no evidence of an impact.

## Secondary outcomes

Turning to behavioural and social outcomes on the SDQ, FAST was effective at lowering 'total difficulties' (representing the risk of mental health disorders) and increasing the likelihood of prosocial behaviour (positive behaviour and interactions such as helping, comforting others, sharing and cooperation) amongst Year 1 as a whole immediately after the eight-week programme (that is, using means for the year group as a whole). However, analysis of outcomes at a later time-point suggests that the beneficial effects of the intervention weaken for total difficulties after the conclusion of the programme (although the difference is still statistically significant), and even fade away and reverses for prosocial behaviour.

Although a similar pattern was seen in the school-averages for the SDQ 'total impact score for behaviour and emotional problems' (indicating chronicity, distress, social impairment, and burden to others), differences between the intervention and control group were not statistically significant.

The size of the effects seen (albeit possibly inflated in a model using school-level means), and the positive accounts of behavioural and relationship change amongst FAST target children by teacher and parents in the process interviews, do suggest a beneficial effect here. This effect is particularly remarkable given that FAST was only delivered to 18% of Year 1 families. That behavioural effects seem to fade by the end of the programme (and even reverse for prosocial behaviour) suggests that behavioural changes are not maintained at the levels initially recorded. Considering this further, it is possible that in the period immediately after the programme, teachers' completion of the SDQs involved confirmation bias—certainly the FAST programme engendered a huge sense of engagement, commitment and positivity from staff partners involved, and we should note that the mid-point SDQs were completed by Year 1 teachers who, in many schools, were directly involved as staff partners in the eight-week programme. It should be noted that the end-point SDQs were completed by Year 2 teachers, many of whom had not had direct involvement with the FAST programme—and so confirmation bias is unlikely to have occurred here. The dissipation from mid- to end-point also reflects the observation in practice that the FAST programme itself does not necessarily have a strong focus on behaviour during FASTworks, as discussed in the process evaluation section (as families can adopt whatever activities they wish), and indeed that FASTworks was not comprehensively implemented amongst schools in this evaluation. Moreover, by the end of the study, the small number of Year 2

teachers we interviewed felt that their Year 2 classes were just like any other Year 2 class in terms of behaviour.

The findings above reflect the large body of existing evidence on FAST, in terms of positive outcomes on behaviour (Macdonald *et al.*, 1997; Crozier *et al.*, 2010; Ackley and Cullen, 2010)—at least in the period immediately after the programme. They also reflect a stronger theory of change for behavioural outcomes (compared with attainment), although it is interesting that our study shows that behavioural outcomes are not necessarily maintained—certainly not for the whole experiment (although note that the differences for total difficulties’ were still statistically significant at end-point). Other studies have focused on measuring behavioural outcomes just for FAST ‘target’ pupils (Layzer *et al.*, 2001; Knox *et al.*, 2011) and it may be in ours that the FAST ‘target’ pupils were driving the initial impacts seen for the whole year group. Certainly if any changes amongst the ‘target’ children were large this would be seen at the school level. We cannot know this for certain as the SDQ was completed anonymously in this study. This suggestion fits process interviews, where FAST co-ordinators and teachers identified behavioural outcomes for FAST children, but less so for the whole class.

### **Implementation of the FAST intervention**

In the process evaluation, most of the FAST schools we spoke to thoroughly engaged with FAST and felt it had benefited their schools immensely in terms of enhancing their capacity for parental engagement—despite the intensity of the programme and the challenges they faced (such as recruiting partners or time commitments). Fidelity for FAST programme completion was good—83% of Year 1 families taking part graduated. That said, 16 schools cancelled the programme due to the high commitments required and/or other priorities. Schools found that identifying some parents as advocates for FAST, to encourage other parents to join, was an effective engagement strategy. The family meal and dedicated one-to-one time between parents and the FAST child were felt to be the most engaging and important parts of the programme—engendering closer relationships between parents and children and providing strategies for positive structures at home.

Implementation of FASTworks was overall limited (although 22 schools did respond that their parent groups had met as part of FASTworks, and in a few schools parents had met many times). However, without formal support for longer-term sustainability, it would seem that the behavioural and parental-engagement impacts identified are not spread to the wider parent community or they dwindle. Any future roll-out of FAST needs to strengthen the FASTworks element of the programme. It also needs to set out more realistic expectations for schools and partners at the start, in terms of time commitments required.

Whilst the programme is universal, it perhaps also needs to explore whether more targeting would be permissible and/or beneficial—for example, by ensuring that different cultural and language groups are included (which may require partners with a range of language skills). Although covered in the training, it might be worth schools re-iterating where any families ‘missing’ that would have particularly benefited from FAST, and how best to engage them, perhaps in another cycle of FAST. Schools commented that they would find recruiting to and delivering FAST easier a second time round, and it may be that to build further school and social capital, FAST and FASTworks need to become part of the life of the school and parent community over time.

One final element to consider is how well the programme transfers from the U.S.A. to U.K. context. Whilst in places in the U.S. a culture of parent communities may be relatively strong, for example, returning to school on an evening to take part in meetings, providing support when their children in summer camps, organising bake sales, and so on, it would seem this culture may not readily transfer to the U.K. context. There is perhaps a disjuncture between FAST taking place between local partners and parents on-site in the school, and FASTworks being parent-led with the school taking a ‘back seat’ which does not readily fit with the U.K. context—where often the school (rather than parents) are in the driving seat for initiatives or at least involved in some way. Sustained parent-parent relationships and



empowerment to sustain outcomes seems to have been difficult to achieve (or at least to capture) without any school or other support or initiator. Certainly in the few schools where FASTworks ‘took off’ in this evaluation, the school FAST co-ordinator appeared to play an active role in instigating the group, supporting on-site activities (such as craft groups), and helping to organise trips and picnics. It would be interesting to see if, over time, in these schools, FASTworks becomes more parent-led and wider parent social capital is built. Further development of this aspect of the programme is needed—perhaps introducing FASTworks to parents earlier in the programme. It may also be worth considering a model that encompasses whole school change towards greater parental engagement, where parent and staff partners continue to build relationships beyond the eight-week programme.

## Limitations

A number of limitations need to be considered when interpreting the results of this trial in terms of the primary outcome, secondary outcomes, and the QED. Some are limitations necessitated by design (for example, using anonymised SDQ data), whilst others are related to what was observed in the evaluation (such as attrition and missing data).

### Primary outcome: limitations and considerations

For the **primary outcome**, limitations included the relatively high level of school (27%) and pupil attrition (41%) in the Key Stage 1 analysis, a small potential for bias from teacher-provided scores, and that dilution in terms of the proportion of Year 1s taking part in FAST was greater in practice than originally modelled. These are discussed further below, as is the multilevel model

School data attrition related, in the main, to schools’ preference to not have their Key Stage 1 papers independently marked (despite signing up to this activity and not raising any concerns about this until the summer term 2017). Concerns included schools feeling they were being ‘checked up on’, not wanting to send papers off site, and that they would need to seek further parental consent for this activity. An alternative for schools to provide their teacher ‘raw’ scores was offered later in the evaluation, and taken up by a number of schools that had such concerns. However, there remained a tranche of schools that did not provide Key Stage 1 data for reasons of time and staff changes. School data attrition also varied by intervention and control group (attrition was higher in the intervention group)—possibly related to the incentive offered to control group schools (£1,000 for their end-point data). Although intervention schools received a grant to cover their expenses for FAST (perhaps seen as equivalent to offering control schools a financial incentive), the length of time since the eight-week programme and, for some schools, feeling over-burdened by the FAST intervention and its own programme requirements were reasons for not providing data. In addition, 14 of the 16 ‘cancelled’ intervention schools did not provide follow-up data—some never responded to contacts and others withdrew completely.

Pupil attrition was then exacerbated in that the primary outcome required a combined score from the Reading and Arithmetic papers—for some pupils, data for just one of these papers was provided; for some pupils no data was provided. An analysis of ‘missingness’ showed that everFSM pupils were less likely to have Key Stage 1 outcomes in the dataset.

In order to further explore the impact of attrition and missing data bias on the primary outcome results, a multilevel imputation model was run. There was no evidence to constitute an effect of FAST seen in the model conclusions. In addition to the specified SAP, models using KS1 AREs for each of reading, maths and reading/maths combined were run, with over 6,700 observations in each and less than 6% pupil-level attrition in each. These models also found no evidence of an effect of FAST.

We must also consider whether the variation in Key Stage 1 data provision (independent marks or teacher-provided scores) led to any bias in the primary outcome. The original design, for independent marks, was felt to be a fair way to obtain unbiased scores from all schools as a ‘best’ alternative to more

expensive and probably impractical independent test administration at Key Stage 1. The approach would also mitigate any variation in teacher judgement that might be observed in Key Stage 1 marking (which by its very nature allows some teacher assessment). That said, *marking bias* by teachers in the intervention group versus the control group was felt to be only a slim possibility: teachers were one year on from the intervention, and would most likely mark in their usual way without thinking about any involvement in the trial.

By collecting teacher scores as an alternative, where papers were not provided for independent marking, variation through teacher judgement is possible—particularly within the Reading Paper; but less so in the Arithmetic Paper which has a mark scheme that essentially comes down to ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. It is therefore worth noting that 26% of schools providing Key Stage 1 data did so through teacher-provided scores (rather than papers for independent marking). It is possible that some variation in teacher judgement may have impacted on the precision of the analysis undertaken—and more so in intervention schools where 39% of schools providing Key Stage 1 data did so via teachers’ scores (whilst in control schools this figure was 15%)—although without independently marking such records, we cannot verify this.

Another feature to impact on the primary outcome is dilution—a necessary part of the study design as the family recruitment phase of FAST is intrinsic to the intervention itself and so had to happen after school-level randomisation. This, however, aligned with the theory that FAST is a whole school intervention with impacts resulting from a subgroup of families taking part. The ‘dilution’ observed in this trial will have been larger than planned, as only 18% of Year 1s took part in FAST (rather than the designed 33%), and hence the potential to observe impacts on attainment was weakened.

### **Secondary outcomes: limitations and considerations**

For the secondary outcomes, limitations included the anonymous collection of data (a necessary part of the design) and potential confirmation bias by teachers. These are discussed below.

The SDQ data for this trial was collected anonymously in order to avoid parental opt-in consent for sensitive and personal emotional health data about their child. The design therefore could not link SDQ results to the primary outcome or at the pupil-level across time. A further limitation here was that this instrument cannot be completed or administered by an independent evaluator, as it needs to be teacher-completed and hence was not ‘blind’. Whilst there is no risk of bias at baseline (as the baseline SDQ is completed prior to randomisation), there is a risk at mid-point and end-point of confirmation bias. This is the case with all self-complete or perceptual data where participants know which group they are in.

To explore participation bias more broadly, we asked teachers and FAST school co-ordinators in interviews whether they felt being part of the RCT had influenced either their participation in FAST or their data completion in any way, and all responded that the RCT had not influenced their behaviour or responses. We were unable to access the Middlesex University SDQs, due to data access restrictions, which may have thrown further light on any confirmation bias.

A further limitation with the end-point SDQ data was attrition. Only 47% of randomised intervention schools (78% of controls) completed an end-point SDQ so although our chosen model maximised the use of available data through the simultaneous modelling of mid-point responses, results should still be treated with caution, particularly for end-point.

### **QED: limitations and considerations**

In order to explore dilution further, the study included a QED for the FAST children only. The comparison group model was limited in that it could not use EAL or SEN for matching (due to data consent having changed for this sensitive personal data). It showed no effect of FAST on Key Stage 1 attainment. Due to the inability of a QED to achieve balance on unobservable characteristics, its results cannot be considered to be causal.

## Other limitations

Whilst the CACE analysis included both a dichotomous variable (graduation or not) and a more sophisticated continuous variable (number of weeks of FAST attended) at the pupil level, FASTworks data was not sufficiently comprehensive or fine-grained to include in the CACE analysis. That said, FASTworks activity itself was limited, and as seen in both the longer-term SDQ analysis and process interviews, it is unlikely to have been a key factor in attainment results.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that this was a large scale effectiveness trial of FAST as it is delivered in the real world—and within the limitations discussed above, results are generalisable to other groups of schools taking part in FAST. However, two areas of the programme were influenced by the trial—and these would be implemented differently outside of the trial. Firstly, the trial required a focus on Year 1s, rather than Reception to Year 2, and it is clear that this was a challenge to achieve in practice. This means that in usual implementation, any wider impact would be across more year groups, meaning any spillover could affect more year groups, but could also be even more dilute. Secondly, the Phase 1 time period was shortened by a week or so to accommodate the trial baseline and randomisation windows, and this had some impact on schools' abilities to recruit families in the usual way. That said, whilst a number of school interviewees noted these issues as challenges, other school co-ordinators did not perceive these to be an issue.

## Future research and publications

Any future research into outcomes from FAST perhaps needs to consider a longer term approach to attainment outcomes and whether these are likely to be seen across the whole year group—as the theory of change does not appear sufficiently strong in practice to achieve attainment outcomes in the timescale observed here. To explore whole year group change, or school turn-around (as in Spier and Bos, 2015, in the U.S.A.), the intervention itself requires more input, including higher uptake and greater support during FASTworks. An evaluation would need to follow schools over more time to explore how programmes such as FAST build schools' capacity for parental engagement, and how best to support and sustain engagement and impacts in the longer-term. From this study, it may be worth qualitatively following up the schools that did take up FASTworks to explore indications of wider change in future.

Future RCTs on FAST will also need to take into account what was achieved in terms of family recruitment on this trial when designing in any dilution effect and exploring impact at school level.

FAST did have an impact on behaviour in the short term and to a lesser extent in the longer term in terms of total difficulties. Future evaluations of FAST need to continue to follow any behavioural change for the FAST children themselves to see how this evolves over time.

Finally, it is worth remembering that this is a universal programme, open to all from Reception to Year 2. The group that takes part is 'targeted' only in the sense that they are a subgroup of the schools' families (although some informal identification of families for whom the school feels FAST would be beneficial can take place). The zero effects seen in this trial, could be an indication that there are other families in the school, missing from FAST, who could benefit more from such a programme. This aspect of recruitment and engagement could benefit from further research.

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## Appendix A: EEF cost rating

Cost ratings are based on the approximate cost per pupil per year of implementing the intervention over three years. More information about the EEF's approach to cost evaluation can be found [here](#). Cost ratings are awarded as follows:

Cost rating	Description
£ £ £ £ £	<i>Very low:</i> less than £80 per pupil per year.
£ £ £ £ £	<i>Low:</i> up to about £200 per pupil per year.
£ £ £ £ £	<i>Moderate:</i> up to about £700 per pupil per year.
£ £ £ £ £	<i>High:</i> up to £1,200 per pupil per year.
£ £ £ £ £	<i>Very high:</i> over £1,200 per pupil per year.

## Appendix B: Security classification of trial findings

1. Criteria for rating: in each column highlight the relevant cell in green.
2. Initial score: write how many padlocks the trial has received based on the first 3 columns (“x 🚫”) and highlight in green (initial score is the lowest rating from the first three columns – see guidance on security classification for more detail).
3. Adjust: record adjustment for balance and threats for validity in the adjust column
4. Final score: write the number of padlocks (“x 🚫”) in the relevant cell and highlight in green
5. Provide a brief summary of your classification, following the bullet point prompts below

Rating	Criteria for rating			Initial score		Adjust		Final score
	Design	Power	Attrition <sup>27</sup>					
5 🚫	Well conducted experimental design with appropriate analysis	MDES < 0.2	0-10%					
4 🚫	Fair and clear quasi-experimental design for comparison (e.g. RDD) with appropriate analysis, or experimental design with minor concerns about validity	MDES < 0.3	11-20%					
3 🚫	Well-matched comparison (using propensity score matching, or similar) or experimental design with moderate concerns about validity	MDES < 0.4	21-30%					
2 🚫	Weakly matched comparison or experimental design with major flaws	MDES < 0.5	31-40%					
1 🚫	Comparison group with poor or no matching (E.g. volunteer versus others)	MDES < 0.6	41-50%	1				
0 🚫	No comparator	MDES > 0.6	over 50%					

- **Initial padlock score:** lowest of the three ratings for design, power and attrition = The design is a randomised controlled trial which has been powered to 0.17. However, there was mass pupil level attrition of 41%. Therefore, this trial should have 1 padlock.
- **Reason for adjustment for balance** (if made): The authors missing data analysis suggests that there has been differential attrition for lower performing schools and from schools from the intervention group in this trial. These factors combined contribute to an effect size difference of

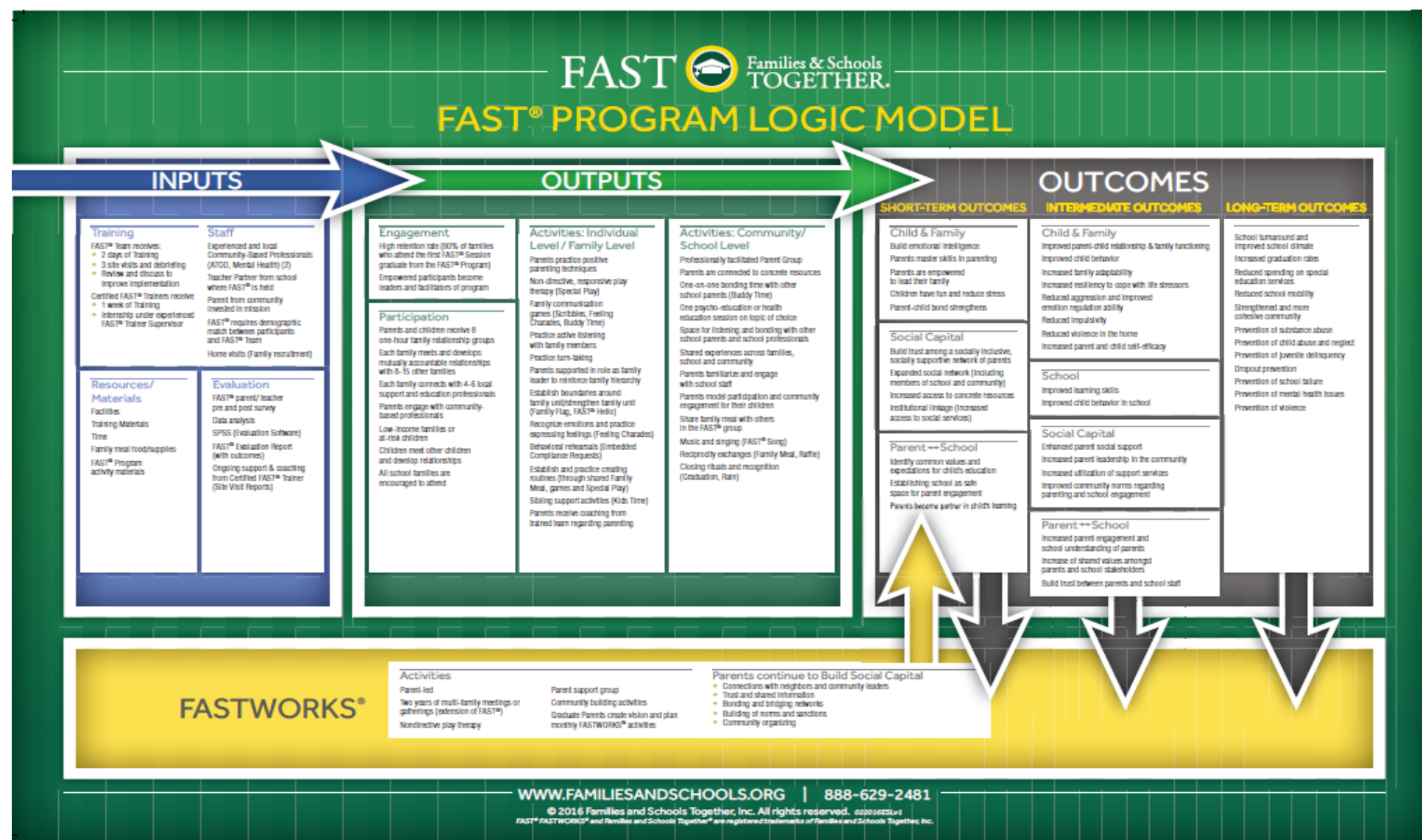
<sup>27</sup> Attrition should be measured at the pupil level (even for clustered trials) and from the point of randomisation to the point of analysis.



0.10 (with the intervention group having a higher baseline pre-test score). Due to the low padlock for attrition, I do not feel that lowering the padlock further is necessary.

- **Reason for adjustment for threats to validity** (if made): No threats to validity are present so no adjustment is needed.
- **Final padlock score:** initial score adjusted for balance and internal validity = The padlock rating would indicate a 1 padlock trial due to attrition. However, the additional age related expectations analysis (with approx. 6% attrition) also showed that there was no effect of the intervention, Therefore the final padlock rating for this trial will be 3 padlocks which allows for some drop for the attrition and balance concerns outlined above but also factors in the additional analysis.

## Appendix C: FAST Logic Model



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## Appendix D: School agreement

*FAST Participation Agreement: Version 7 issued 17/04/2015*

### Agreement

**To participate in a Randomised Controlled Trial Evaluation of Families and Schools Together Dated**

**[INSERT DATE]**

**between**

(1) **The Save the Children Fund** a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (178159) and a registered charity in England and Wales (213890) and Scotland (SC039570) whose registered office is at 1 St. John's Lane, London EC1M 4AR (hereafter referred to as Us, We, Our)

**and**

(2) **The National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales**, a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (900899) and a registered charity in England and Wales (313392) whose registered office is at The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire. SL1 2DQ (hereafter referred to as NFER)

**and**

(3) **[INSERT SCHOOL NAME AND ADDRESS]** (hereafter referred to as You, Your).

and hereafter each individually referred to as a Party and referred to together as the Parties.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Save the Children is working with the Education Endowment Foundation (hereafter referred to as EEF) and NFER to conduct a Randomised Controlled Trial Evaluation (hereafter referred to as Evaluation) that will independently assess the impact that Families and Schools Together (hereafter referred to as FAST, the Programme) has both on families that take part in FAST and on the school population overall.
- 1.2. This will be achieved by comparing outcomes for Year 1 children in schools that run FAST with outcomes for Year 1 children in schools that do not, to see whether FAST has an impact on children's academic attainment and personal, social and emotional outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1.
- 1.3. The results of the research will contribute to understanding what works in raising pupils' academic attainment and will be widely disseminated to schools in England.
- 1.4. By taking part in the Evaluation Your school can help evaluate and improve FAST for the benefit of thousands of children in disadvantaged families.
- 1.5. This Agreement sets out the terms of Your school's participation in the Evaluation, and will continue in full force and effect until the end of the Evaluation.



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**2. Term of this Agreement**

- 2.1. This Agreement will start on the latest date of signature on page 5 and will end when the Parties have completed all the obligations of this Agreement, unless any Party ends it as detailed in section 3.1 below.
- 2.2. The Evaluation will begin at the start of the Autumn term in 2015 and Your school's involvement will finish at the end of the Summer term in 2017.

**3. General**

- 3.1. If any Party has to end this Agreement it will do so in writing delivered by e-mail with a delivery receipt and sent to the signatories on page 5.
  - 3.1.1. This notice will be treated as served on the day on which the delivery receipt is received by the sender.
- 3.2. This Agreement shall be governed by English law and the Parties agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the courts of England.
- 3.3. At all stages of the Evaluation, named personal data must be provided to NFER via a secure webportal link that will be provided to You upon signing this Agreement and again at each relevant data collection point.

**4. Roles**

- 4.1. Save the Children will be Your first point of contact for any questions about the Evaluation and will provide ongoing support to Your school via your Programmes Manager.
- 4.2. The Evaluation Team, comprising researchers from NFER and the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University, will:
  - 4.2.1. Conduct the random allocation of schools and commit to communicating the outcome (whether Treatment or Control) in respect of each school in the Evaluation.
  - 4.2.2. Collect and analyse data for the Evaluation.
  - 4.2.3. Ensure all staff carrying out the Evaluation in Your school are trained and have received DBS clearance.
  - 4.2.4. Provide You with school-level feedback relating to the data You have provided after the Evaluation has been completed.
- 4.3. You will:
  - 4.3.1. Allow the time needed for each part of the Evaluation and liaise with Save the Children and the Evaluation Team to find appropriate dates and times for any meetings, events or visits to take place.
  - 4.3.2. Make Your staff and pupils available as appropriate to undertake the Evaluation.
  - 4.3.3. Ensure the shared understanding and support of Your staff for the Evaluation, the Evaluation Team and any other personnel involved in the Evaluation.



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**5. Your obligations before Randomisation****5.1. Upon signing this Agreement:**

- 5.1.1. You undertake to inform parents or guardians of children taking part in the Evaluation about the Evaluation and give them the opportunity to opt out of providing data to the Evaluation Team at any point, and to notify Us in writing of any person who wishes to opt out.
- 5.1.2. You agree to act as point of contact for parents or guardians seeking more information on the Evaluation and to pass these requests on where appropriate.
- 5.1.3. You agree to provide the following Baseline Data for each child who will be in Year 1 at the beginning of the Evaluation:
  - 5.1.3.1. Unique Pupil Number, name and date of birth of each child for whom consent has not been withdrawn as detailed in section 5.1.1 above.
  - 5.1.3.2. A Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire fully completed by the child's class teacher and then anonymised.
- 5.1.4. You agree to provide a brief pro-forma outlining which, if any, parental engagement or family intervention programmes Your school has been involved with over the last 18 months, completed by a senior leader on behalf of Your school.
- 5.1.5. We will provide a date by which Baseline Data must be provided by You for Your school to be eligible to take part in the remainder of the Evaluation.

- 5.2. Upon confirmation from the Evaluation Team to Us that You have correctly and completely provided Baseline Data, Your school will be eligible for Randomisation as detailed in section 6 below.

**6. Randomisation**

- 6.1. Random allocation is essential to the Evaluation as it is the only way to fairly assess the effect FAST has on a child's attainment. It is important that You understand and consent to this process.
- 6.2. Your school will be randomly allocated by the Evaluation Team to either the Treatment Group or the Control Group.
- 6.3. There exists robust evidence from the United States that FAST improves outcomes for children, in particular for measures of behaviour. This Evaluation is primarily concerned with attainment, on which FAST's impact is far less certain. By agreeing to randomisation, You acknowledge that pupils in Your school have an equal chance of benefitting from these softer outcomes or alternatively acting as a control for the Evaluation.
- 6.4. You agree to be bound by this allocation and, depending on the group Your school is allocated to, to the obligations listed below.

**7. Your obligations if Your school is allocated to the Treatment Group**

- 7.1. Your school will run FAST, as outlined in the Partnership Agreement in Schedule 2 of this Agreement, for a period of 24 months beginning in school year 2015-6.
- 7.2. You will be required to sign a Partnership Agreement, in the form set out at Schedule 2, before starting the Programme.



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- 7.3. The Programme will be funded by Us in accordance with our standard payment schedule listed in the Partnership Agreement in Schedule 2.
- 7.4. In addition to the requirements of FAST as outlined in the Partnership Agreement in Schedule 2, You will be required to provide upon completion of the 8-week Programme a further Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire fully completed by the child's class teacher for each child in Year 1 and then anonymised.
- 7.5. The Evaluation Team may wish to visit Your school to observe FAST sessions, and/or to speak with staff, volunteers or parents involved with the programme.
- 7.6. The Evaluation Team will require a log of any FASTworks activity between the end of the 8-week Programme and end of Year 2, to be completed by a nominated representative of Your school.

#### **8. Your obligations if Your school is allocated to the Control Group**

- 8.1. You will be required to provide a Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire fully completed by the child's class teacher for each pupil in Year 1 and then anonymised.
- 8.2. Your school will receive a payment of £1,500, paid in instalments as detailed in Schedule 1, subject to confirmation that data has been correctly and completely provided.

#### **9. Provision of Final Data at the end of the Evaluation**

- 9.1. For the avoidance of doubt, Final Data must be provided by all schools, whether allocated to the Treatment Group or the Control Group.
- 9.2. At the conclusion of the Evaluation in Summer 2017, You will be required to provide the following Final Data for each pupil in Year 2:
  - 9.2.1. Completed Key Stage 1 test papers.
  - 9.2.2. A Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire fully completed by the child's class teacher and then anonymised.
- 9.3. You agree to provide a brief final pro-forma outlining any other parenting or family support programmes Your school has been involved with over the period September 2015–July 2017 completed by a senior leader at Your school.
- 9.4. NFER will, if You agree, administer and mark Key Stage 1 test papers for Your school free of charge. If you choose to administer and mark your own Key Stage 1 test papers, NFER will require access to Your school premises to witness the administration of the tests, and access to the completed test papers in order to mark them independently.

#### **10. Use of Data**

- 10.1. Pupils' test responses and any other pupil data will be treated with the strictest confidence. No individual school or pupil will be identified in any report arising from the research.
- 10.2. NFER will link test responses with information from the National Pupil Database (held by the Department for Education) and share the data with the Department for Education, EEF, EEF's data contractor FFT Education and in an anonymised form to the UK Data Archive. You agree that the Evaluation Team, using the UPNs, names and dates of birth that You supply, will access the National Pupil Database to retrieve Early Years Foundation Stage data as well as demographic data such as

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free school meals eligibility and gender. Data submitted to or collected by the Evaluation Team will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the published Trial Protocol (a set of guidelines detailing how the Evaluation Team will conduct the Evaluation), a copy of which will be available on the EEF website.

We hereby commit to taking part in the Evaluation of FAST as detailed above.

**On behalf of [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]**

Name

Signature

**On behalf of Save the Children UK**

Name

Signature

Date

**On behalf of the National Foundation for Education Research**

Name

Signature

Date                    16<sup>th</sup> April 2015

### **Schedule 1**

**Payments to be made to schools allocated to the Control group**

#### Payment 1

£500 on correct and complete provision of data outlined in section 8.1 above.

#### Payment 2

£1,000 on correct and complete provision of data outlined in section 9.2 above.



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**schedule 2****Copy of Partnership Agreement to be signed by schools allocated to the Treatment group**

This is an example of Our current Partnership Agreement for schools running FAST. You will need to sign a copy of this Agreement, which will be provided to You, only if Your school is allocated to the Treatment group.

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**FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS TOGETHER (FAST) PROGRAMME between:**

- (1) **The Save the Children Fund** a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (178159) and a registered charity in England and Wales (213890) and Scotland (SC039570) whose registered office is at 1 St. John's Lane, London EC1M 4AR (referred to in this contract as Us, We); and
- (2) (You).

**IT IS AGREED AS FOLLOWS****1. How long this contract lasts**

This agreement will start on the date of signature on page 5 and will end upon completion of the 24 month programme when we have both completed all the obligations of this partnership, unless either of us cancels it.

**2. What Save the Children will do****2.1. We will provide:**

- a grant towards your programme delivery costs, details of which are set out on page 4
- a certified FAST trainer, or FAST trainer student under supervision, to the site and support you in building a multi-agency and community team to deliver the programme
- training materials and FAST Programme manuals for your FAST team members, which you should keep and store safely at the end of each cycle
- quality assurance to ensure fidelity to the FAST model
- training on monitoring and evaluation processes to enable you to collect data for the programme appropriately
- team and site certification as a FAST site, so long as you complete the programme successfully and subject to review from a certified trainer
- if you certify as a FAST site, a site evaluation report produced by Middlesex University (first or recertifying sites only, unless required)
- facilitation for visitors to observe FAST sessions, particularly during graduation, and supervision of visitors at all times





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- publicity for this partnership wherever possible

#### 2.2. We will also:

- keep secure all personal information about FAST participants which you share with us in accordance with our data protection policy (tell us if you would like a copy) and store and use it only for the purpose of delivering and evaluating the FAST programme
- make sure that only our employees or trainers who need to see it for the purpose of delivering the programme in your school have access to this personal information, which we will delete at the end of the programme.

### 3. What we expect you to do

You must:

- recruit at least 25 families to the FAST programme
  - support the FAST trainer in building a multi-agency team and
  - provide two school staff per hub to become part of the FAST team, and release them to attend programme-related training and meetings
  - be satisfied that all school, community and parent partners on your FAST team are safe to work with children and that you have completed criminal records checking where appropriate
  - fulfil all FAST evaluation requirements, ensuring all parent and teacher partners complete relevant questionnaires in a timely fashion
  - share key statistical information as required
  - follow all programme integrity and practice requirements
  - grant us permission to use any photos taken in the course of your FAST programme, ensuring that all families featured have consented using the Save the Children consent form we will give you
  - provide a brief outline of how you have spent your Parent Progression monies
  - follow GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) in accounting for your grant including recording payments and record-keeping of invoices
  - follow our Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy in Annex 2 in relation to your grant □ make your records for use of our grant available for inspection at our reasonable request
  - only use our name and logo with our prior written permission.
  - publicise this partnership wherever possible.
- invoice us for all sums due to you within 90 days of the end of Phase 3 of your FAST cycle, unless otherwise stated.

### 4. Safeguarding

- 4.1 We will each comply with our respective Child Safeguarding Policies and while our trainers and employees are working on your premises we will also comply with your Child Safeguarding Policies. Our Policy is set out in Annex 1.



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4.2 We will each notify the other immediately if either of us has any safeguarding concerns in connection with the FAST programme.

## **5. FAST materials**

The FAST materials which we leave with you are copyright. You may use them within your school so long as you do not remove the copyright notices or alter the content. You must have our prior written permission to share them outside your school.

## **6. Dispute Resolution**

If a dispute arises, every effort should be made in the first instance to try to resolve matters informally with staff closest to the issue. If we disagree over anything which cannot be resolved informally, then we will each refer our dispute to a suitable senior leader on either side. If we are still unable to resolve the dispute by this means within 60 days then either of us may refer the matter for resolution by non-binding mediation. Neither of us will resort to issuing legal proceedings unless mediation is unsuccessful and/or fails to achieve resolution of the dispute within 30 days.

## **7. Cancellation, postponement and rescheduling**

7.1. We will invest significant amounts of charity money in setting up your programme. For this reason:

- If you need to change the programme start date or you cancel the programme you must give us a minimum of 30 days' notice.
- We will require you to repay your grants if the programme is not delivered.
- If you cancel by giving us less than 30 days' notice we will require you to pay a cancellation charge to reimburse us for any costs which we have already paid or which we are committed to pay and cannot avoid. This charge will be in addition to repayment of your grant.
- If you are unable to meet any of your commitments in section 3 we will be entitled to end this contract. We will give you a reasonable time to reimburse our expenses and repay your grant.

## **8. General**

- If either of us has to end this contract we will do so in writing delivered by email with a return receipt and sent to the signatories on page 5.
- This notice will be treated as served on the day on which the return receipt is received by the sender.
- This contract shall be governed by English law and we each agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the Courts of England and Wales.

## Key dates and grant details

Dates		
	Phase 1	[insert confirmed date]
	Phase 2	[insert confirmed date]
	Graduation	[insert confirmed date]
	Phase 3*	[insert provisional date]
	Programme sustainability	[insert provisional date]
	*usually occurs 8 weeks after submission of all evaluation returns to Middlesex University	
Grant	FAST Programme Delivery Costs grant of £2800 per cycle.	
	<p>This grant is allocated to cover costs to sites of running the FAST cycle. You should invoice us at the start of Phase 1 as a lump sum; the following suggested breakdown is for your guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food for weekly family meals: £700, equating to £35 per family and based on the FAST national average of 20 families attending. (Suggested breakdown is £25 per family to cover the meal and £10 to cover additional items such as drinks, fruit, etc.)*</li> <li>• Family hampers - £500, equating to £25 per family hamper and based on the FAST national average of 20 families attending.*</li> <li>• General programme expenses - £1,400 to be spent at your discretion, for example on additional hours or cover for school staff supporting the FAST programme; play materials for FAST activities; volunteer expenses; childcare costs for parent-partners' child/ren.</li> <li>• Graduation expenses - £200 (e.g. photography, decorations, cake). We can provide a professional photographer if you wish, at your expense.</li> <li>• *Food and hamper grants are based on an average of 20 families attending and are issued pro rata. If more families attend you can invoice us for £60 for each extra family to cover the additional expense. If fewer families attend we will ask you to reimburse the appropriate portion of the grant.</li> </ul>	
Parent Progression	An additional payment of a maximum of £500 may be available to support parent- partner learning and development - for example by hiring a trainer or speaker. Please speak to your Save the Children contact if your parent partners will be utilising these funds, which must be applied for by the end of Phase 3 of your FAST cycle.	
Follow-on Grant	FAST Programme follow-on grant of £500 per cycle	
	This grant is intended to support the development and sustain the outcomes of the FAST programme for parents. It can be applied for once the parent support group (FASTworks) has been set up. Parents must be able to access the grant, and should account for it through the school's procedures.	

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**ANNEX I****SAVE THE CHILDREN'S CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY****Our values and principles**

Child abuse is when anyone under 18 years of age is being harmed or isn't being looked after properly. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional or neglect. The abuse and exploitation of children happens in all countries and societies across the world. Child abuse is never acceptable.

It is expected that all who work with Save the Children are committed to safeguard children whom they are in contact with.

**What we do**

Save the Children is committed to safeguard children through the following means:

**Awareness:** Ensuring that all staff and those who work with Save the Children are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.

**Prevention:** Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and those who work with Save the Children minimise the risks to children.

**Reporting:** Ensuring that you are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

**Responding:** Ensuring that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, this is what is expected of you:

If you are worried that a child or young person is being abused or neglected, or you are concerned about the inappropriate behaviour of an employee, or someone working with Save the Children, towards a child or young person, then you are obliged to:-

- contact your Save the Children manager with your concerns immediately (or their senior manager if necessary)
- keep any information confidential to you and the manager.

If you want to know more about the Child Safeguarding Policy then please contact your Save the Children manager.

## ANNEX 2

### SAVE THE CHILDREN'S ANTI-BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION POLICY

#### Our values and principles

Save the Children does not allow any partner, supplier, sub-contractor, agent or any individual engaged by Save the Children to behave in a corrupt manner while carrying out Save the Children's work.

#### What we do

Save the Children is committed to preventing acts of bribery and corruption through the following means:

Awareness: Ensuring that all staff and those who work with Save the Children are aware of the problem of bribery and corruption.

Prevention: Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and those who work with Save the Children minimise the risks of bribery and corruption.

Reporting: Ensuring that all staff and those who work with Save the Children are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding allegations of bribery and corruption.

Responding: Ensuring that action is taken to support and protect assets and identifying cases of bribery and corruption.

To help you identify cases of bribery and corruption, behaviour which amounts to corruption includes but is not limited to:

- a) Paying or Offering a Bribe – where a person improperly offers, gives or promises any form of material benefit or other advantage, whether in cash or in kind, to another in order to influence their conduct in any way.
- b) Receiving or Requesting a Bribe – where a person improperly requests, agrees to receive or accepts any form of material benefit or other advantage, whether in cash or in kind, which influences or is designed to influence the individual's conduct in any way.
- c) Receiving or Paying a so-called 'Grease' or 'Facilitation' payment – where a person improperly receives something of value from another party for performing a service or other action that they were required by their employment to do anyway.
- d) Nepotism or Patronage – where a person improperly uses their employment to favour or materially benefit friends, relatives or other associates in some way. For example, through the awarding of contracts or other material advantages.
- e) Embezzlement - where a person improperly uses funds, property, resources or other assets that belong to an organisation or individual.
- f) Receiving a so-called 'Kickback' Payment – where a person improperly receives a share of funds, a commission, material benefit or other advantage from a supplier as a result of their involvement in a corrupt bid or tender process.
- g) Collusion – where a person improperly colludes with others to circumvent, undermine or otherwise ignore rules, policies or guidance.
- h) Abuse of a Position of Trust – where a person improperly uses their position within their organisation to materially benefit themselves or any other party.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, this is what is expected of you: You have a duty to protect the assets of Save the Children from any form of corruption. Furthermore, you must immediately report any suspicion of bribery or corruption to the Save the Children senior

management team or Country Director and not to anyone else. Failure to report will be treated as serious and may result in termination of any agreement with Save the Children.

You are obliged to:-

- encourage your own staff to report on bribery and corruption
- contact the Save the Children senior management team or Country Director with your concerns immediately (or their senior manager if necessary)
- keep any information confidential to you and the manager.

Attempted corruption is as serious as the actual acts and will be treated in the same way under this policy.

If you want to know more about the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy then please contact your Save the Children manager.

## Appendix E: Project and Participant Information Sheets



**Evidence for  
Excellence in  
Education**



**National Foundation for  
Educational Research**

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### FAST Evaluation Information Sheet

#### What is the FAST programme?

The Families and Schools Together programme (FAST) is a parental engagement programme that has been run in a number of countries over the last 25 years. It aims to support parenting, improve children's behaviour, and enhance links between families, school and the community. Parents and their children attend eight weekly 2.5-hour group sessions, delivered by local partners who are trained by accredited FAST trainers. Save the Children UK (SCUK) delivers FAST in UK primary schools, via a license agreement held by Middlesex University and the FAST programme in the USA.

#### What are the evaluation aims?

Previous evaluations show that FAST supports children's behaviour and parents' confidence. However, we do not know if it might improve children's learning in school. This study aims to evaluate the impact of FAST on children's learning, through a randomised controlled trial. Schools will be randomly allocated to take part in the FAST programme or to a control group. The trial will look at outcomes on children's attainment (as measured by end of Key Stage 1 tests) and children's social, emotional and behavioural outcomes (as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)).

#### Who is conducting the evaluation?

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and partners at the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University (CCFR) are carrying out the independent evaluation. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has commissioned and funded the evaluation.

#### What will the research involve for all schools?

**All schools** will provide data to NFER including: a list of children in Year 1 so that NFER can access their KS1<sup>28</sup> results in 2017 (unless parents have said they do not want their child's KS1 data included); and a set of teacher completed SDQs<sup>29</sup> for Y1 children **with no names on**, at the beginning, middle and end of the trial. All schools will also complete a short baseline and end-point pro-forma about any other family or parenting support programmes they are involved with.

<sup>28</sup> NFER will collect each child's KS1 assessments from all intervention and control schools to be independently marked. NFER will also access EYFS data from the National Pupil Database to provide a baseline for analysis.

<sup>29</sup> The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a short questionnaire containing 25 items and five further questions. Teachers will need to complete a paper version for each Y1 child in the school.

## What will happen with schools in the control group?

Schools in the **control group** won't receive the FAST programme. They will be asked to continue as usual delivering any other programmes they would normally run. Control schools will need to take part in the research activities for **all** schools described above.

## What will the intervention involve?

Schools in the **intervention group** will take part in the FAST programme. Key staff will attend FAST training on how to deliver the programme. They will then invite families with Year 1 children to take part in the FAST programme. The local FAST team will then run the programme on a weekly basis as a twilight session (e.g. 3.30-6pm) one night a week for eight weeks. Parents may then continue to meet on a monthly basis for two years following the initial 8-week programme. This aspect is called *FASTworks*.

## What other data will be collected in intervention schools?

Schools in the intervention group will need to complete a **family attendance register** at the FAST sessions. A local lead will help facilitate this (e.g. the local FAST trainer, Programmes Manager, or a local partner). A local partner or parent will need to volunteer to continue to complete an activity **register for FASTworks**. A sample of headteachers/senior leaders will be asked to take part in a **post-delivery telephone interview** with a member of the research team. A smaller number of schools will be invited to take part in case studies. This may involve an **observation of a FAST session**, a **case study visit** to interview staff and parents to find out their views, and **follow-up telephone interviews** with staff and parents.

## What's the overall timetable?

The trial will be run in three termly delivery blocks – Autumn 2015, Spring 2016 and Summer 2016. The baseline and mid-point data collection will take place either side of these delivery blocks. The end-point data collection will happen in Summer term 2017.

## How will schools benefit from taking part?

Schools allocated to the intervention group will take part in the FAST programme, which aims to improve children's attainment and behaviour and enhance links between families, school and the community. Schools in the control group will receive £500 upon baseline SDQ completion and a further £1000 for completion of follow-up SDQs.

## Do schools have to take part?

No, schools only have to take part in the trial if they wish to do so. Parents can opt out of the school providing their child's data to NFER. For schools allocated to FAST, parents can then choose to opt in to take part in the FAST programme and any trial evaluation activity.

## How will NFER use and protect the data collected?

The information collected during the trial will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act, and will be treated in the strictest confidence by the NFER and CCFR. All of the quantitative data<sup>30</sup> collected by NFER and CCFR in this evaluation will be shared with the DfE, the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) (the organisation appointed to manage EEF's data archive) and stored in the EEF data archive and the UK Data Archive for research purposes. **No school or child will be named in any report arising from this work.**

## How will the findings be used?

The overall findings from this research will be included in a publicly available report used to influence practice nationally.

<sup>30</sup> Quantitative data will include: Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs), number of sessions attended, Key Stage 1 results, EYFS scores, and SDQ results at school-level.



**Who can I contact for more information?**

Pippa Lord, the Project Leader at NFER, is very happy to answer any questions you might have.  
Please contact her on 01904 567633 [p.lord@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:p.lord@nfer.ac.uk)

## Evaluation of FAST

### ***FASTworks* information sheet for families**

#### **What is the FAST programme?**

You and your family have been taking part in the Families and Schools Together programme (FAST) recently at your school. The programme aims to support parenting, improve children's behaviour, and enhance links between families, school and the community. Parents and their children attend eight weekly 2.5-hour group sessions, delivered by local partners who are trained by accredited FAST trainers. Save the Children UK (SCUK) delivers FAST in UK primary schools. After the eight weeks, groups can continue to meet at times appropriate to them. This is called *FASTworks* and can take any form that the group wishes – from coffee mornings at a group member's house to more formal meetings at school.

#### **How is it being evaluated?**

As you may know, your school has chosen to take part in the national evaluation of FAST run by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER), working with the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University (CCFR). The study aims to evaluate the impact of FAST on children's learning, through a randomised controlled trial. This is where a group of schools receive the FAST programme and are compared to another group that do not. Your school will be providing NFER with data including: a list of children in Year 1 so that NFER can access their KS1 results in 2017 (unless parents have said they do not want their child's KS1 data included); and a set of teacher completed SDQs for Y1 children with no names on, at the beginning, middle and end of the trial. We have also asked your permission for SCUK to share with us your family attendance information from the 8-week FAST Register.

#### **Why are you being approached now?**

It will be very helpful if the evaluation team can know if you continue to meet or take part in FAST activities over the next year or so – until summer 2017. This is so that the evaluation team can see if continued activity makes any difference to outcomes. Someone in your school will organise the *FASTworks* sessions (this could be the school FAST co-ordinator or a parent partner for example) and will need to know if you do not want them to enter your family's data into the *FASTworks* register. This will include your child's name in a key to identify the family and the number of your family members who attend each session.

#### **What will happen with your information?**

Data from the *FASTworks* registers will be shared by your local partner with NFER. It will be linked to the National Pupil Database (NPD) for your Y1 child and will include their Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 results. Data collected in this evaluation will then be provided to Fischer Family Trust (FFT) (the organisation appointed to manage EEF's data archive) and stored in the EEF data archive and the UK Data Archive for research purposes. **No school, parent or child will be named in any reports about this work.**

#### **What if you don't want any information about your involvement in *FASTworks* included in the evaluation?**

You do not have to provide information about your family's involvement in *FASTworks*. If you do not want this information to be shared, please return the reply slip attached to the *FASTworks* organiser.

#### **How will the findings be used?**

The findings from this research will be included in a written report at the end of the trial. This will help EEF to understand the impact that FAST has on children's learning, and help schools to work with families to support children's learning and behaviour.

#### **Who can I contact for more information?**

**Pippa Lord**, the Project Leader at NFER, is very happy to answer any questions you might have. Please contact her on 01904 567633; [p.lord@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:p.lord@nfer.ac.uk)

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**Families *FASTworks* register data Parent opt-out form**

Please complete this form if you would not like your family's register data for *FASTworks* to be provided to NFER.

Your child's name:.....Class:.....

Your name (please print):.....

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Please ask your child to return this form to the *FASTworks* organiser at {insert your school name here}.

**Please return this slip to the school within 5 days.**

## Appendix F: Parent consent letters

{Should you wish to, please add your school logo and information here}

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National Foundation for Educational Research  
The Mere, Upton Park, Slough. SL1 2DQ  
[www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)  
Autumn 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

### Family engagement research- Families and Schools Together (FAST)

{Please add name of school} is taking part in a project that will assess the impact of a family engagement programme (FAST) that is designed to improve children's attainment and behaviour and improve links between families, school and the community. You need to know that this research is taking place, and that you can opt out of information about your child being used in the trial if you wish.

The project is funded by Save the Children UK and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), and the research will be carried out by an independent evaluator team from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University.

The school will provide some pupil background data (including names and dates of birth) to the NFER via a secure portal. This data will be linked to the National Pupil Database (NPD) for your child and will include their Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 results. This information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act and will be treated in the strictest confidence by the NFER and Loughborough. All of the data collected by NFER and Loughborough in this evaluation will be shared with the Department for Education, Fischer Family Trust (FFT) (the organisation appointed to manage EEF's data archive) and stored in the EEF data archive and the UK Data Archive for research purposes.

In addition, your child's teacher will also complete anonymous questionnaires relating to your child's personal, social and emotional development. This questionnaire data will be provided to the evaluator team and make up part of the data set that is passed on to the organisations listed above, but will never have a name attached to it. The overall findings for this research will be included in a publicly available report used to influence practice nationally.

**Data on schools and pupils participating in the evaluation will be kept confidential and no school or child will be named in any report arising from this work.**

You may opt out of information about your child being used in the project at any time. If you do not want your child's data shared, please inform {enter school staff contact name}, who will make sure that the evaluators are informed.

### What do I need to do now?

If you **do not** want your child's data to be given to NFER please complete the slip overleaf and return it to school.

If you have any questions about the research, please telephone David Hereward at NFER on 01753 637352 or email him at [d.hereward@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:d.hereward@nfer.ac.uk) and he will be happy to answer any queries you might have.

Yours faithfully

{enter school staff contact name}

.....  
RPO\FAST\41230\p

**Families engagement project pupil data Parent opt-out form**

Please complete this form if you would not like your child's data to be provided to NFER.

Your child's name .....Class.....

Your name (please print) .....Signed.....

Date .....

Please ask your child to return this form to {insert your preferred name/contact here} at {insert your school name here}.

**Please return this slip to the school within 5 days.**

## Appendix G: Randomisation Syntax

### Appendix G – Randomisation syntax

Title 'Randomisation for block 1a of the FAST trial'.

GET DATA /TYPE=XLSX

/FILE='K:\FAST\Block 1A randomisation list.xlsx'

/SHEET=name '34 NFER EARLY BLOCK SUBMISSION'

/CELLRANGE=range 'A1:U28'

/READNAMES=on

/ASSUMEDSTRWIDTH=32767.

\*Check for duplicates.

sort cases by contactID.

match files file=\*/first=f/last=l/by contactID.

cross f by l.

delete vars f l.

sort cases by SCURegion.

dataset copy schools.

\*\*\*Stratified randomisation of schools.

\*If we ensure regions are in random order.

\*And within regions schools are in random order.

\*We can allocate group in sequence.

aggregate outfile=\*/break=SCURegion/nschools=n(contactID).

list vars=SCURegion nschools.

set rng=mt, mtindex=40001.

compute regrand=rv.uniform(0,1).

dataset copy regions.

```
match files file=schools/table=regions/in=inreg/by SCUkRegion.
```

```
freq inreg.
```

```
set rng=mt, mtindex=40002.
```

```
compute schrand=rv.uniform(0,1).
```

```
*Randomise.
```

```
sort cases by regrand schrand.
```

```
compute twos=2*trunc(($casenum-1)/2).
```

```
compute group=$casenum-twos.
```

```
list vars=SCUKRegion ContactID group.
```

```
freq group.
```

```
cross SCUkRegion by group.
```

```
add value labels group 1 'FAST' 2 'Control'.
```

```
sort cases by SCUkRegion ContactID.
```

```
save outfile='k:\FAST\CfS\randomisation\Block1a.sav'/drop=nschools regrand inreg  
schrand twos.
```

```
SAVE TRANSLATE OUTFILE='K:\FAST\CfS\randomisation\Block1a.xlsx'
```

```
/TYPE=XLS
```

```
/VERSION=12
```

```
/MAP
```

```
/REPLACE
```

```
/FIELDNAMES
```

```
/CELLS=LABELS
```

```
/drop=nschools regrand inreg schrand twos.
```

```
dataset close all.
```

## Appendix H: Process evaluation data collection overview

**Table H1: Process evaluation: quantitative data received**

Group	Baseline pro-formas (N)	End-point pro-formas (N)	FAST Family Register data (N)	FASTworks data (N)	Cost data (N)
<b>Intervention</b>	78	22	63	44	20
<b>Control</b>	76	48	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	154	70	63	44	20

N = no. of schools supplying data

**Table H2: Process evaluation: Number of qualitative data collection activities carried out**

Sub sample of schools	Training session observations (N)	Case study observations (N)	Case study visits (N)	Follow-up case study visits (N)	FAST co-ordinator telephone interviews (N)
<b>Block 1</b>	1	1	3	3	11
<b>Block 2</b>	1	1	3	2	14
<b>Block 3</b>	1	1	2	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	3	3	8	5	28

N = no. of schools

**Table H3: Process evaluation: Number of case study interviews**

Role of people interviewed	Case study visit interviews (n)	Follow up visits (n)
<b>School senior leader</b>	1	
<b>School FAST co-ordinator</b>	1	5
<b>School staff partner</b>	4	
<b>Parent partner</b>	9	
<b>Community partner</b>	1	
<b>Family evaluation activity, involved n families</b>	42 families	
<b>Parent group discussion</b>	9	
<b>Parent individual interviews</b>	2	8
<b>Year 1 teachers</b>		3
<b>Year 2 teachers</b>		4
<b>Family Liaison Officer</b>	1	
<b>FS/KS1 Inclusion Manager</b>	1	
<b>TOTAL (number of individuals involved)</b>	71	20

n = number of people interviewed/taking part



## Appendix I: SCUUK Grant Information

Grant	FAST Programme Delivery Costs grant of £2800 per cycle.
	<p>This grant is allocated to cover costs to sites of running the FAST cycle. <b>You should invoice us at the start of Phase 1 as a lump sum</b>; the following suggested breakdown is for your guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food for weekly family meals: £700, equating to £35 per family and based on the FAST national average of 20 families attending. (Suggested breakdown is £25 per family to cover the meal and £10 to cover additional items such as drinks, fruit, etc.)*</li> <li>• Family hampers - £500, equating to £25 per family hamper and based on the FAST national average of 20 families attending.*</li> <li>• General programme expenses - £1,400 to be spent at your discretion, for example on additional hours or cover for school staff supporting the FAST programme; play materials for FAST activities; volunteer expenses; childcare costs for parent-partners' child/ren.</li> <li>• Graduation expenses - £200 (e.g. photography, decorations, cake). We can provide a professional photographer if you wish, at your expense.</li> <li>• *Food and hamper grants are based on an average of 20 families attending and are issued pro rata. If more families attend you can invoice us for £60 for each extra family to cover the additional expense. If fewer families attend we will ask you to reimburse the appropriate portion of the grant.</li> </ul>
<b>Parent Progression</b>	An additional payment of a maximum of £500 may be available to support parent-partner learning and development - for example by hiring a trainer or speaker. Please speak to your Save the Children contact if your parent partners will be utilising these funds, which must be applied for by the end of Phase 3 of your FAST cycle
<b>Follow-on Grant</b>	FAST Programme follow-on grant of £500 per cycle
	This grant is intended to support the development and sustain the outcomes of the FAST programme for parents. It can be applied for once the parent support group (FASTWorks) has been set up. Parents must be able to access the grant, and should account for it through the school's procedures.

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