

The Ealing Parents Engagement in Children's Achievement (EPICA) Project Report

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Project background

The Ealing Parents Involvement in Children's Attainment (EPICA) project was funded by the John Lyon's Charity. It aimed to provide significant education and development benefits to children and parents.

The project had the following objectives:

- To improve the ability of parents to understand their children's learning and to help and support them more effectively with their schooling and education
- To contribute to an improvement educational attainment rates of children of parents participating in the project
- To improve understanding for parents with language and literacy needs of teacher and school requirements and education objectives for their child.

Two programmes were offered under the EPICA banner:

1. A homework support group for parents and their children - an 11-session long programme that helps parents to understand / find their way around the UK education system and to develop strategies to support their children with their learning and their homework.
2. The BaSE club (Brain and Self Explorers club) - a series of workshops for parents and children which explore exciting, new ideas about the brain, learning, dealing with challenges, etc.

Both programmes aimed to improve children's attainment by engaging parents in their children's education by giving them information and strategies to support their children at home.

Progress to date - statistical information

The Ealing Parents Engagement in Children's Achievement (EPICA) project has had a positive impact on the participants. The project was delivered in seven primary schools (West Acton Junior, Wood End Academy in Greenford, St Vincent's in Acton, St Raphael's in Northolt, Berrymede Junior School in Acton, Blair Peach Primary School in Southall and Dormers Wells Primary School in Southall) and engaged 213 parents and 335 children. There were two practitioners working in three schools each.

As mentioned above, the programme engaged 335 children from across all curriculum levels from reception to year 6. By far the largest group of children was from Year 3 (87) followed by Year 4 and Year 2 (72 and 54 respectively) (please see fig 1 below for details).



pupil, year group distribution

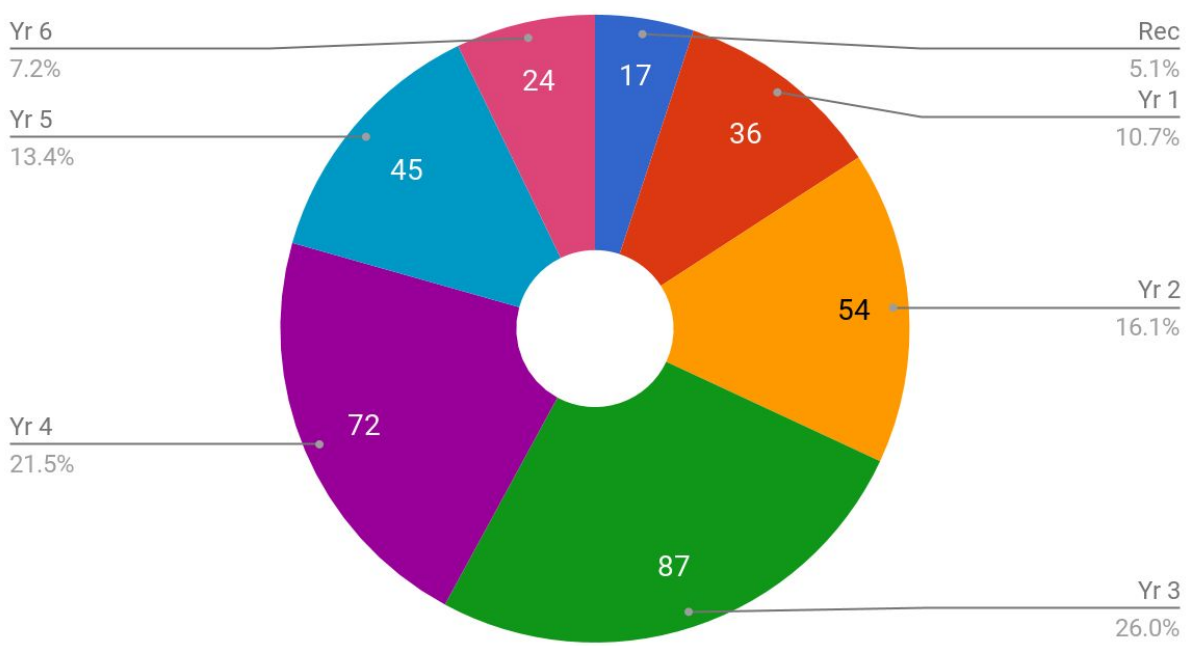


Fig. 1 Pupil distribution

Impact/benefits for the stakeholders

Both programmes, the Homework Club and the BaSE Club, were received very well by the children, parents and schools.

Parents' feedback

Parents in the 'Homework Club' told us that they had found participation in the project beneficial and that they had improved their ability to support their children at home. E.g. they felt that they

were better equipped to help their children do well at school. Their understanding of their children's curriculum improved. They were more likely to talk to their children about school and to help them with their homework, and the children were happy about this increased parental involvement.

"I enjoy parents homework support group [...]. [It] is very helpful for me and my son. I learn lots of different ideas and new ways to help my son with his homework."



The impact on the children was also positive. Children became more confident in class as class work and their spelling test results improved.

"When I started this class I learned so much and it helped me to do my work and it makes me more confident in class."

In the BaSE club parents reported a positive change in their children's attitude to learning in the areas such as confidence, engagement, working harder in completing homework, positive attitude to challenges and mistakes.

Yes he feels comfortable to take new challenges and try out new things. Used to give up. In the past he would say 'I can't do it' now he completes tasks quickly and without complaining.

They felt that their children picked up useful strategies from the programme. Their responses suggested that children's better understanding of neuroplasticity and malleability of intelligence had had a positive effect on their ability to persist with their learning. It seems that being able to relate learning to tangible physical changes in the brain seems to be enough for children to justify their struggles with learning and helps them to believe that these difficulties can be overcome with practice and perseverance.

He definitely likes the idea of new connection being made in his brain by learning new content. We have also focussed on the need for frequent practising of something new to get better at it.



“When I started this class I learned so much and it helped me to do my work and it makes me more confident in class.”

Parents also reported **improvement in performance** at school such as progression in sets, improved spelling test scores or SPAG test results. They commented that their children used positive strategies to encourage themselves to persevere such as talking to themselves, e.g:

My son is better from last year. He moved up a set in Maths. He really thinks about the growth mindset and his brain when he struggles with maths.

Aizaa is improving. She talks to herself when she gets stuck, e.g. ‘neurons that fire together, wire together!’

Majority of parents (82%) said that there was a change in their children’s behaviour, e.g.: some parents referred to children’s ability to stay focussed for longer during homework time:

He’s positive towards things now, e.g. he doesn’t leave his homework until last minute. In the past I would have to sit with him. Now he sits by himself and only asks for my help when he’s really stuck.

...or improved ability to deal with frustration caused by mistakes, e.g.: *I find he is handling making mistakes better and becoming less frustrated. Also, he is able to work more independently.*

In order to check if there was a lasting effect of the interventions we sent out follow up questionnaires to September cohorts (5 months delay). Parents’ responses indicated that the positive impact of the intervention continued long after the programme had ended. This, for example, related to the way parents supported their children:

Before when my child struggled with her homework, I recommended to leave it but now I support her having different strategies e.g. the yet power.

I stopped shouting and I encourage him a lot

I also spend more time with her.

... or to the way children dealt with challenges, e.g.:

When she does [get] stuck, she now spends more time to collect more information, correct the mistakes and tries again and again until she gets successful outcome.

Whenever they learn new thing they say more brain is been born.

Teachers' feedback

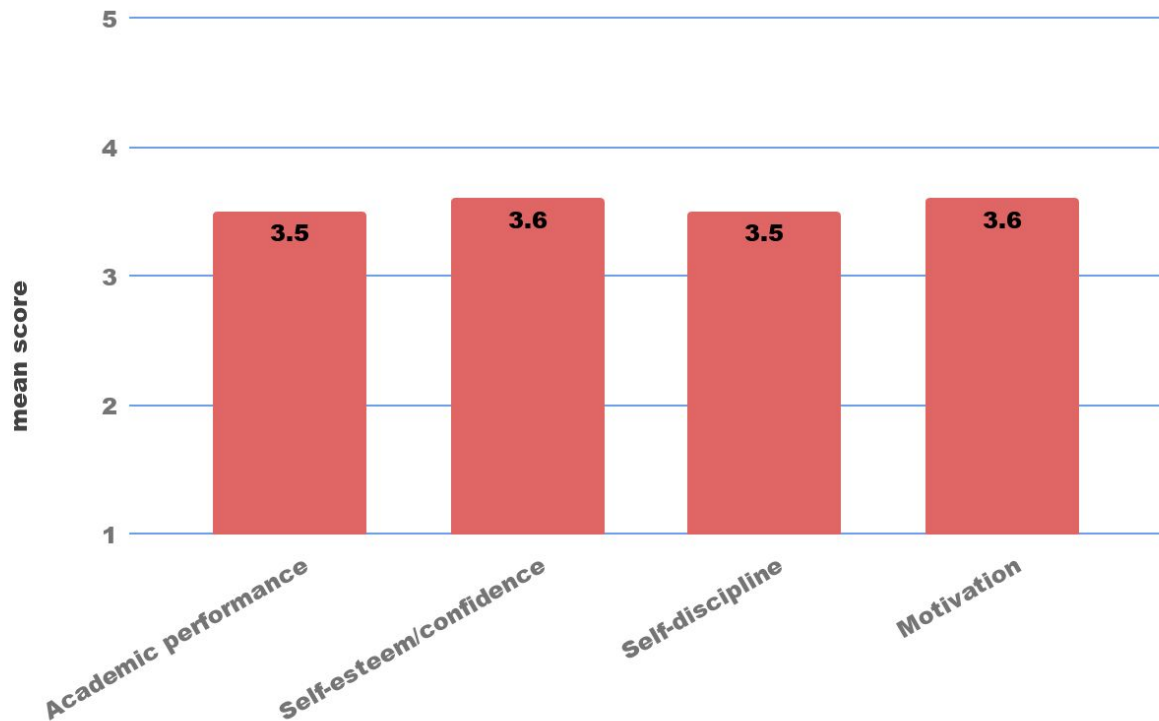
In response to the difficulties that we've had collecting feedback from school teachers we have made several changes to the way we collect feedback from them. This has led to an increase in the rate of responses. We have developed an online questionnaire with Likert scale responses to allow teacher to complete questionnaires with a minimum disruption to their busy schedules.



“When she does [get] stuck, she now spends more time to collect more information, correct the mistakes and tries again and again until she gets successful outcome.”

Teachers were asked to rate their pupils' progress/improvement in academic performance, self-esteem/confidence, self-discipline and motivation on a scale from 1 (no improvement at all) to 5 (significant improvement). Overall 62 online feedback forms were returned. The analysis of the responses indicate that, according to teachers, children made average to good improvement in the areas above scoring on average 3.6 pts (see table below for details).

Teachers' feedback



The qualitative feedback that we've collected demonstrates positive changes in children's attitudes to learning, their confidence, academic performance, etc, e.g.:

Stood up in front of Year 6 and sang an English song, huge development when you consider she only said "Good morning" at the beginning of the year.

Alessandra has always been very committed to her learning, the most significant improvement is that she wants to help others more and gets a lot of enjoyment in explaining things to others.

I think Sebastian was good generally at all of these areas, however he is getting more confident in speaking aloud with teachers and class friends.

She responds much better to making a mistake. She has enjoyed finding where she went wrong and how to rectify it.

Konstancja can make much more progress if she continues this attitude in Year 3. She has become a more confident child and I wish her luck in her new class with her new teacher! Well done to the Belcarz family for changing Konstancja's mindset!

Ongoing need

The Ealing Parents Involvement in Children's Attainment project was a successful project that helped parents develop skills to support their children's learning. It successfully promoted parental engagement which translated into better attainment for their children. The project was valued by all three parties, i.e. the schools, parents and children. The number of participants, which has exceeded by over a 100% the 'target number' speculated in the project proposal, demonstrated clearly the need and demand for these types of projects.

Interviews with teachers, parents and pupils

Interview with Dr Geri Gowans - Berrymede Junior (Acton)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuGYZeAT3-s>

Interview with Ms George - Blair Peach Primary School (Southall)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bHGSX2Awj0>

Interview with Parents and Children - Blair Peach (Southall)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1hn-opKrgk>

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