

Research Briefing N° 64

EPPE project: findings on academic outcomes at age 10

The Effective Pre-School and Primary Education project (EPPE 3-11:2003-2008) is the second phase of the original Effective Provision of Pre-school Education project (EPPE 3-7: 1997-2003 subsequently extended to 2014). It focuses on the relationships between various child, family, home, pre-school and primary school characteristics and measures of children's academic attainment age 10 in Year 5 during Key Stage 2 (KS2). It compares these findings to the impact of the same factors when the children were younger.



Key words: EPPE; primary education; Key Stage 2; longitudinal; mixed-method; child development; cognitive attainment; academic; UK

This Research Briefing is related to others on the **Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education project (EPPE/EPPSE)**: N°s 65, 66, 67, 68 and 69.

Key findings at age 10

The full report describes three main sets of influences studied: child/family; evidence of continuing pre-school influence; the contribution of the primary school attended; and the interaction between these three influences. Only selected findings are presented here, for more detailed findings see: [‘Influences on Children's Attainment and Progress in Key Stage 2: Cognitive Outcomes in Year 5’ – Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 Project \(EPPE 3-11\)](#)

- A stimulating early years home learning environment (HLE) and parents' (especially mothers') qualification levels are the most important background factors relating to a child's attainment in reading and maths at age 10.
- Attendance at a higher quality or more effective pre-schooling continues to exert a positive effect on reading and maths, even after background factors have been taken into account.
- There were no long term benefits from attending a pre-school of low quality.
- Attending high quality pre-school and a more academically effective primary school can give a significant boost to intellectual development, especially in maths.
- The academic effectiveness of the primary school a child attended was a significant factor in reading and maths attainment in Year 5.

What we did

The original Effective Provision of Pre-School Education study (1997 to 2003) monitored children's intellectual and social-behavioural development between the ages of 3–7 years. The EPPE 3-11 extension follows up the sample to the end of primary school (age 11 years). Funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the second phase explored:

- Is there a continuing impact of pre-school on children's academic (reading and maths) and social-behavioural development at age 10?
- What is the influence of primary school on children's development?
- How do pre-school and primary school jointly influence children's development?
- What is the impact of the family and home on children's development?

The findings show that no one factor is the key to raising children's attainment – it is the combination of experiences over time that matter. Raising the quality of learning in both the home and pre-school are likely to be more successful in improving children's developmental trajectories, especially for disadvantaged groups, than concentrating on either in isolation.

Impact

The EPPE project has contributed widely to 'evidence based policy' in early years education and care. Its findings are robust because they are based on sound and innovative research methods and have been used to inform policy development by successive governments. Findings from the case studies have informed the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum guidelines and are used extensively by practitioners who are concerned with issues of quality, learning and social justice.

Further information

For more detail on implications, methods, analyses and references, see the full report ['Influences on Children's Attainment and Progress in Key Stage 2'](#)

Also see the [project website](#) for information on this and other project phases.

The research has been extended to follow the same sample to their post compulsory school destinations (age 16+) to investigate how early experiences influence long term trajectories: see [project website](#)

Other reports in this phase of the study explain in depth the influence of child, family and HLE on children's development. In addition, extensive observations in Year 5 classrooms give insights into the everyday practices that make a difference to children's learning.

How we did it

The EPPE 3-11 project contains a series of three 'nested' studies or 'tiers' which help answer specific research questions.

Tier 1 answers the research question about the effectiveness of the 950+ primary schools the EPPE 3-11 children attended. It used statistical data (matched Key Stage 1 (KS1) and KS2 national assessment results) for successive pupil cohorts derived from every primary school in the country (over three consecutive years 2002-2004) for English and maths to provide value added estimates of the academic effectiveness of each school.

Tier 2 involved the collection of information on academic and social-behavioural development for every child in the sample in the Spring Term of Year 5, during 2003- 2006.

Tier 3 explored classroom practice through two different but complementary classroom observation schedules.

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