

# The impact of Creative Partnerships on attainment and attendance in 2008-9 and 2009-10:

## Executive summary

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Creative Partnerships is the Government's creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of young people across England, raising their aspirations and achievements, and opening up more opportunities for their futures. It started in 2002 with 381 core schools in 16 deprived areas of England. Since 2002, the programme has expanded across the country and has worked with over 1 million children, and over 90,000 teachers in more than 8000 projects in England.

This research explored the impact that Creative Partnerships had on young people's attainment and attendance. The study focused on the following groups of young people:

- Pupils who sat national key stage exams or those who were assessed by teachers at the end of the 2008/09
- Pupils who sat national key stage exams or those who were assessed by teachers at the end of the 2009/10.

Progress in attainment was evaluated separately for key stage 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The research also considered the impact of Creative Partnerships on pupil attendance using two measures: total absence and unauthorised absence.

### **Key findings: Attainment**

The study found a number of significant positive effects at the pupil level, comparing pupils who had taken part in Creative Partnerships with other similar pupils in the same school, although not all findings were consistent in both years and the differences between the groups were relatively small. However the main findings that were statistically significant and consistent were:

- At key stage 1, pupils involved in Creative Partnerships activities made significantly greater progress in speaking and listening compared to other similar pupils in Creative Partnerships schools in both 2009 and 2010
- At key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils involved in Creative Partnerships activities made significantly greater progress than other similar pupils in Creative Partnerships schools:
  - At key stage 3, the difference was statistically significant for pupils' average points score, and English in 2009 and 2010
  - At key stage 4, the difference was statistically significant in 2010 in pupils' total and capped points score.

### **Key findings: Attendance**

There was evidence of a slight relationship between involvement in Creative Partnerships activities and increased levels of pupil attendance, although there was no consistent pattern across both years. The relationship could be seen at both pupil and school level:

- In 2009 there was some evidence to suggest reduced levels of total absence in secondary schools involved in Creative Partnerships
- In 2010 there was some evidence to suggest reduced levels of unauthorised absence in primary schools involved in Creative Partnerships.

### **Conclusions**

This research provided some positive messages for Creative Partnerships. Creative Partnerships appeared to be contributing to a degree of progress in attainment, especially for young people directly involved at key stages 3 and 4. To illustrate the amount of difference involved, pupil level analysis in 2009 revealed an effect equivalent to 13 per cent of the young people who attended Creative Partnerships activities achieving, on average, one level higher in their key stage 3 average points score than expected, given their background characteristics. In comparison to other similar pupils not attending Creative Partnerships schools (at the school level), the effect was equivalent to nine per cent of Creative Partnerships pupils achieving, on average, 1 level higher for their average key stage 3 points score than expected, given their background characteristics.

This study was the fourth study which NFER conducted that explores the impact of Creative Partnerships<sup>1</sup>. Like the first and second studies, this study analysed data at both school and pupil levels. (The third study, focusing on results in 2007 and 2008, analysed data at the school level only.) The current study was the first study in the series to include key stage 1 data analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> References to the other three studies are at the end of the executive summary.

The positive attainment results for pupils at key stage 3 and 4 are in line with the results from previous studies. All three studies that examined results at pupil level show improved results for pupils' average point score and English results at key stage 3, and improved results for the total GCSE point score at key stage 4 (with the exception of 2009).

The impact of Creative Partnerships on attendance was less clear, but there is evidence of some small, positive associations for young people, particularly for secondary pupils in 2009 and primary pupils in 2010. This is also in line with previous studies, which have shown a tendency for improved attendance for Creative Partnerships schools and pupils, particularly at primary level.

The report concludes that Creative Partnerships appeared to be making a small but valuable contribution to improving attainment at key stages 1, 3 and 4.

### **Sample and method**

Creative Partnerships provided the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) with a list of schools that had been or were currently involved in the programme. The NFER contacted the coordinators at these schools to find out which pupils at the schools had been involved in Creative Partnership activities. These pupils formed the intervention sample which included over 35,000 pupils and 194 schools in 2009, and over 67,000 pupils and 445 schools in 2010.

Using data from the National Pupil Database, and taking account of other characteristics such as ethnicity, school type, and deprivation measures, the research team compared the progress of the intervention sample to that of other similar young people nationally.

Unlike previous studies, this study did not analyse exclusion rates as part of the analysis of attendance. This was because in any school the numbers of pupils that are excluded represent a very low proportion of the school population and it is difficult to draw conclusive results from such a small sample. On the other hand, this was the first study in which key stage 1 results were analysed. Key stage 1 analysis was included because the advent of the Early Years Foundation Stage checkpoints made it possible to measure progress between this point and a child's score in their teacher assessments at key stage 1.

For further information, please see the full report:

Cooper, L., Benton, T. and Sharp, C. (2011). *The Impact of Creative Partnerships on Attainment and Attendance in 2008-9 and 2009-10*. Slough: NFER

## References

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