

Playing for Success

An Evaluation of the Fourth Year

Caroline Sharp, Jenny Blackmore, Lesley Kendall, Katy Greene,
Wendy Keys, Anna Macauley, Ian Schagen and
Tilaye Yeshanew

National Foundation for Education Research

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ISBN 1 84185 924 9
April 2003

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Executive Summary	iii
1. Introduction to the report	1
1.1 About <i>Playing for Success</i>	1
1.2 Aims of the National Evaluation	2
1.3 Research design	2
1.4 About the sample of pupils, parents and schools	4
1.5 About this report	5
2. About the Study Support Centres	7
2.1 Centres' operation and location	7
2.2 Mentors and staffing ratios	12
2.3 What did the Centres aim to do?	14
2.4 Using the environment and medium of sport	15
2.5 Celebration events	17
2.6 Feedback to schools	18
2.7 Main challenges during the year	19
2.8 Main achievements during the year	20
2.9 Future developments for the Centres	24
2.10 Summary: About the Study Support Centres	25
3. Who attends <i>Playing for Success</i>?	29
3.1 Pupil selection	29
3.2 Pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	33
3.3 Pupils' attendance at <i>Playing for Success</i>	36
3.4 Pupils' interest in sport	38
3.5 Summary: Who attends <i>Playing for Success</i> ?	43
4. Expectations and experiences of <i>Playing for Success</i>	47
4.1 What did pupils think of the Centre?	47
4.2 What did parents think about <i>Playing for Success</i> ?	53
4.3 Teachers' views of <i>Playing for Success</i>	59
4.4 What improvements to the Study Support Centre did pupils, parents and schools suggest?	67
4.5 How did the sports club environment contribute to pupils'	

	experiences	73
4.6	Summary: Expectations and experiences of <i>Playing for Success</i>	75

5.	Achievement in numeracy and reading, and changes in attitudes	79
5.1	The numeracy and reading tests	79
5.2	The attitude questionnaire	79
5.3	Examining differences in attainment	81
5.4	Progress in numeracy	81
5.5	Progress in reading comprehension	91
5.6	Measuring pupil attitudes	96
5.7	Summary: Achievement in numeracy and reading and changes in attitudes	100
6.	Achievement in computer skills	103
6.1	The checklist of computer skills	103
6.2	Overall computer skills	104
6.3	Computer basics, word processing, using the internet and using email	108
6.4	Summary: Achievement in computer skills	113
7.	Discussion and conclusion	
7.1	What did the national evaluation find this year?	115
7.2	Four years of evaluating <i>Playing for Success</i>	116
7.3	What do four years of evaluation tell us about the impact of <i>Playing for Success</i> ?	117
7.4	How have such large gains been possible?	120
7.5	Is <i>Playing for Success</i> equally beneficial for different groups of pupils?	122
7.6	How has the sports context influenced pupils' experiences?	123
7.7	Looking to the future: what happens next?	126
7.8	Conclusion	127
	Appendix 1: Analysis of progress compared to expectations	129
	Appendix 2: The pupil attitude questionnaire	133
	Appendix 3: Participants in the evaluation	141
	References	143

Executive Summary

Playing for Success:

An evaluation of the fourth year

Playing for Success is a national initiative, established by the DfES in partnership with the FA Premier League, the Nationwide League and their clubs, and LEAs. It aims to contribute to raising educational standards, especially in urban areas, by setting up Study Support Centres in professional football clubs and other sports venues. Centres are managed by experienced teachers. They use the medium and environment of sport to support work in literacy, numeracy and ICT. With a focus on addressing the needs of underachieving young people, mainly in Years 6 to 9, the initiative places a strong emphasis on improving pupils' attitudes and motivation to learn.

Key findings

- The evaluation demonstrates that *Playing for Success* is continuing to make a real impact on the pupils who attend.
- *Playing for Success* has reached its target group of underachieving young people
- The 58 Study Support Centres took over 18500 pupils from 1103 schools during 2001–2.
- On average, the young people who participated made significant progress in basic skills. This was particularly evident in numeracy and ICT.
- At least 88 per cent of pupils considered the Centre to be 'fun', 'interesting' and 'a good idea for me'.
- Despite sessions being held after school, most pupils attended for 80 per cent or more of the course.
- Parents had very positive views about their children's participation in *Playing for Success*. All responding parents said they were pleased/very pleased that their child had taken part.
- Teachers rated the Centres' organisation highly. All responding schools wanted another opportunity to take part.

The initiative has contributed to improved achievement

- Pupils made substantial and significant progress in numeracy. On average, primary pupils improved their numeracy scores by about 17 months and secondary pupils by about 24 months.

- Gains in numeracy brought the performance of these under-achieving young people much closer to the level expected for their age-group, especially at KS2.
- Performance in reading comprehension improved during the pupils' time at the Centres, although the progress of primary pupils did not quite reach statistical significance when compared with last year's control group. Secondary pupils' reading comprehension scores improved significantly, by the equivalent of about eight months.
- Pupils' ICT skills improved significantly during their time at the Centres. Their ability to operate a computer, carry out word processing tasks, use e-mail and navigate the Internet improved markedly.
- Pupils' attitudes showed evidence of significant improvement in several respects. Compared with the control group, the changes of greatest educational significance were evident in pupils' independent study skills (for both key stages) and self-image (KS2 pupils only).
- Teachers and parents noticed particular improvements in pupils' self-confidence and ICT skills.

***Playing for Success* has reached its target group of underachieving pupils**

- The initial numeracy and reading comprehension scores of participating pupils were well below the level expected for their age.
- Sixteen per cent of pupils were eligible for free school meals.
- Just over half (54 per cent) of the pupils attending the Centres were boys. A quarter of pupils were from ethnic minority backgrounds, including Pakistani, Indian, Black Caribbean and Black African groups.
- The initiative benefited pupils, regardless of gender, deprivation, ethnicity or their fluency in English. However, there was some evidence that pupils with special needs did not make as much progress as others in self-confidence and basic skills.

What contributed to the Centres' success?

Despite the fact that the initiative has expanded rapidly, the findings are very consistent over the four years of evaluation studies. They demonstrate that the Centres have

achieved a great deal. Gains in numeracy are particularly impressive, given the relatively short periods of time for which pupils attend (most pupils attended for less than 20 hours this year).

The football/sports club setting proved attractive to pupils, and was a strong element in motivating pupils to become involved in *Playing for Success*. They felt privileged to be selected, rather than singled out as in need of extra help.

Once at the Centres, pupils responded positively to many aspects of the initiative, especially using computers and the Internet. They enjoyed the work, felt they had made progress and were grateful for the help they received. They also benefited from the opportunity to meet people and make new friends.

Attending an educational setting other than school gave underachieving youngsters the opportunity to make a 'fresh start'. Student mentors were available to provide advice and support, and the high ratio of staff to pupils enabled pupils to get immediate help and to make progress in their learning.

The Centres provided some of the key elements in supporting independent learning. Centres used a target-setting process, whereby pupils identified their areas of difficulty and were given appropriate tasks. Centre staff and mentors encouraged pupils to become more self-reliant and persistent in their learning. Pupils received feedback on their progress. There were opportunities for pupils to make choices and to develop independent study skills. All these elements contributed to pupils' progress and sense of achievement.

About the evaluation

This evaluation was carried out for the DfES by a team of researchers based at the National Foundation for Educational Research. All 58 Centres returned information about their aims and operation. The team gathered pupil outcome data from 12 Centres (a mixture of new and more established Centres) during the Spring term, 2002.

One thousand one hundred and thirty two pupils, 351 parents and 91 teachers took part in the evaluation this year. The views of pupils, parents and schools were gathered by means of questionnaires. Pupils' attitudes were captured at the beginning and end of their time at the Centre. ICT skills were measured by a self-report questionnaire. Nationally standardised tests of numeracy and reading comprehension, specially designed for the evaluation, were used to assess pupils' progress. For each measure, the progress of pupils attending *Playing for Success* was compared with that of last year's control group (a group of similar pupils who did not attend). The research used statistical techniques to assess whether the pupils attending *Playing for Success* had significantly out-performed the control group and to discover whether key characteristics were related to performance and progress.

Although *Playing for Success* began as a football initiative, it has recently been extended to include other sports. Nine of the 12 Centres included in this year's outcome evaluation were associated with football clubs.

1 Introduction to the report

1.1 About *Playing for Success*

The Government established the *Playing for Success* initiative in 1997, in partnership with the FA Premier and Football Leagues and their clubs, and LEAs. The broad aim of the initiative was to contribute to raising educational standards. In addition, it was anticipated that the Centres would have a major impact on pupils' motivation to learn. The scheme allowed some flexibility for individual Centres to interpret these aims and relate them to local needs.

Playing for Success is a study support initiative targeted at underachieving pupils in key stages 2 and 3. The sessions were to be held after school and at weekends. The running and capital costs of the Centres were to be shared between national and local Government (via the Standards Fund), the clubs and business sponsorship. The initiative envisaged that the Centres would offer excellent facilities for Information and Communications Technology (ICT), with additional funding for this purpose raised from local business sponsors. Using the medium and environment of sport, the Centres were expected to focus on skills in literacy and numeracy, as well as to provide opportunities for pupils to develop ICT and study skills and to complete their homework.

Original guidelines produced by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in 1997 anticipated that the Centres would be open for six, four-hour sessions per week and would be staffed by a full-time Centre Manager, an ICT technician, four student mentors per session and have administrative support. The DfEE convened a national steering group, with representatives from local authorities and football clubs and a national practitioners' group of Centre Managers, LEA representatives and others. The DfES also organised meetings and workshops for Centre Managers, and employed a network of 'critical friends' to provide support and guidance in setting up and running the Centres.

Playing for Success was initially focused exclusively on the top performing professional football clubs. In 2000, the initiative was ‘rolled out’ in response to requests from other football clubs (beyond the FA Premier League and Nationwide Division One) and was extended to include other sports. In a parallel development, a small number of ‘innovative, smaller scale projects’ were established to offer out of school hours education support linked to sport.

1.2 Aims of the National Evaluation

This evaluation was carried out for the DfES by a team of researchers based at the National Foundation for Educational Research. This is the fourth year in which NFER has been responsible for the national evaluation of *Playing for Success*. The main aim of the evaluation was to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of *Playing for Success* and to identify and describe those features leading to success in terms of participation, gains in motivation, positive attitudes towards learning and enhanced learning outcomes.

The evaluation began in September 2001, although most of the data collection took place during the Spring term, 2002. (The rest of the time was taken up with updating existing evaluation instruments, liaising with Centre Managers and analysing the results.)

1.3 Research design

Playing for Success is expanding as more Centres become established (58 Centres were operating in the Spring of 2002). In previous years, the national evaluation set out to include most *Playing for Success* Centres. This year, the DfES felt that the evaluation should target newly-established Centres, which had not been included in previous years. Other Centres were asked to set up their own local evaluation systems, using a framework prepared by the DfES. However, established Centres were allowed to opt back into the national evaluation if they so wished.

The national evaluation sample for 2001–2 consisted of 12 Centres, seven of which were newly-established (since January 2001) and had therefore not participated in the national

evaluation in previous years. New Centres tend to take smaller numbers of pupils, so although there were more new Centres in the sample, the five established Centres provided the majority of pupils.

The evaluation design entailed two main samples. First, in order to gain an overview of the initiative as a whole, information was collected by means of a questionnaire sent to all 58 Managers of Centres in operation in Spring 2002.

The main part of the study focused on pupils attending 12 Centres during the Spring term 2002. Pupils' academic progress during their time at the Centre was assessed using tests of reading comprehension and numeracy. Pupils' progress in computer skills was assessed by a self-report checklist. The evaluation also included a pupil attitude questionnaire.

Parents were asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and end of their child's attendance at the Centre. The research team also sent out a school feedback questionnaire to all schools that had sent pupils to one of the 12 Centres during the Spring term, 2002.

The 12 Centres were asked to supply background information on each pupil participating in the evaluation, namely:

- age and gender
- ethnic group and fluency in English
- whether the pupil had special educational needs
- whether the pupil was entitled to free school meals
- length of attendance at the Centre.

1.4 About the sample of pupils, parents and schools

The evaluation responses included information on 1149 pupils attending the 12 participating Centres during the Spring term, 2002. In order to reduce the burden on any one pupil, Centres were asked to administer two out of four instruments to pupils attending a particular session, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Evaluation materials completed by pupils within each Centre

Pupil Groups	Pre-course	Post-course
Group A	What YOU Think1	What YOU Think 2
	Using Numbers 1	Using Numbers 2
Group B	Using Computers 1	Using Computers 2
	Reading 1	Reading 2

Pupils were asked to complete *either* an attitude questionnaire ('What YOU Think') and a numeracy test ('Using Numbers') *or* an ICT skills checklist ('Using Computers') and a reading comprehension test ('Reading'). The instruments were administered twice, once at the beginning and again at the end of the course (parallel versions of the tests were used, so that the pupils did not perform better on the second occasion simply because they had become more familiar with the tests). Each Centre was provided with all four pupil instruments and pupils were included in the analysis for each questionnaire/test instrument if they had completed both the pre- and the post-course versions. A total of 618 pupils completed at least one pair of pre- and post-course instruments.

In the previous evaluation study, the NFER established a control group of 349 pupils, drawn from schools that were sending pupils to four of the Centres in the Spring term. The purpose of the control group was to enable comparisons to be made between the progress of pupils attending the Centres and that of similar pupils who had not taken part in *Playing for Success*. Pupils in the control group were selected to be as similar as

possible to pupils attending *Playing for Success*, and the evaluation instruments were administered to both groups at about the same time (i.e. to coincide with the beginning and end of the course).

It was felt that the control group element had strengthened the evaluation design in previous years. However, establishing a control group requires considerable effort on the part of the schools, Centres and the evaluation team. While much had been learned from the control-group comparisons, it was decided not to establish a new control group this year. In order to consider the consistency of results this year (2001–2) with those achieved previously, it was decided to relate the results achieved by this year's *Playing for Success* participants to those achieved by last year's control group.

1.5 About this report

This report is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 2 provides information about all 58 *Playing for Success* Centres, their operation, staffing, aims and programme. Chapter 3 presents information about the characteristics and attendance of pupils at the 12 Centres which participated more fully in the NFER evaluation. In Chapter 4, we examine the expectations and experiences of *Playing for Success*, based on the responses of pupils, parents and teachers in the 12 Centres.

Chapter 5 examines the impact of the 12 Centres on pupils' progress in numeracy and reading comprehension, as well as in their attitudes to reading, writing, mathematics, study skills and their attitudes towards themselves. Chapter 6 focuses on progress in pupils' computer skills.

The report concludes with a discussion of the main findings, drawing comparisons with the findings from the previous evaluation studies (Chapter 7). Appendix 1 contains further details of the statistical analysis. Appendix 2 contains information about the composition of the attitude scales and Appendix 3 lists the participating Centres, Steering Group and evaluation team members.

In addition to the main evaluation report presented here, the NFER team carried out two further pieces of work in relation to *Playing for Success*, focusing on innovation Centres and local evaluation reports respectively. These will be published as separate reports, as part of a series of ‘good practice guides’.

2 About the Study Support Centres

This chapter draws on information from the Centre Manager questionnaire, which was sent to the 58 *Playing for Success* Centres operating in 2002. The survey took place in May and we received completed questionnaires from all 58 Centres.

2.1 Centres' operation and location

As noted in Chapter 1, *Playing for Success* was extended in 2000 to football league clubs outside the FA Premier League and Nationwide Division One, as well as other sports. At the same time, a number of 'Innovation Pilots' were established. These were smaller scale projects linking education with sport. The majority of the Centres operating at the time of the survey (42) were from the original *Playing for Success* development, six were 'roll out' Centres and ten were Innovation Centres.

Although *Playing for Success* was initially associated exclusively with football, other sports are now included. The questionnaire asked Centre Managers to identify which sport(s) were associated with their Centre. The answers revealed that although most Centres were associated with a single sport, some were associated with more than one. For example, one Centre Manager reported that her Centre offered links with: '*Rugby, football, hockey, tennis, athletics, lacrosse, etc.*'

The majority of the Centres were associated with football (45 of the 58 Centres). Eight Centres were associated with rugby (both League and Union), five with cricket and four with basketball. Other sports associated with individual Centres were: athletics, gymnastics, hockey, ice hockey, lacrosse, tennis, trampolining and volleyball.

Most of the Centres (46) were based within the main sports venue. The others were located elsewhere including three in purpose-built accommodation, one in a visitors' Centre, three in separate sites associated with the sports venue, three in buildings near the sports venues (including a community building and a converted residential house) and four in local schools. Five Centres were in the process of moving at the time of the survey. Two were operating on a split-site basis in local schools.

The Centres had been operating for different lengths of time, with the first launched in January 1998. We asked Centre Managers whether their Centre had begun operating on a pilot basis at first and found that the majority (48) had done so. The pilot phase lasted for about nine weeks, on average, although the length of the pilot phase varied considerably, from one to 52 weeks. Two Centres were still in their pilot phase at the time of the survey.

In our first evaluation report (Sharp *et al.*, 1999), we highlighted the difficulties faced by Centre Managers who were operating their Centres in spaces used for other purposes, such as conference rooms or the players' lounge. Setting up, dismantling, and storing equipment uses up time and energy and tends to place restrictions on the Centre's operation. For this reason, the questionnaire asked whether their Centre had its own,

dedicated space (i.e. a space which was not in regular use for other, non-educational purposes). The responses to this question revealed that 40 of the Centres had their own dedicated space and 18 did not.

Once the Centres are established, they have the potential to be used by other groups wishing to access the computer facilities and learning resources. Most (53) of the Centre Managers were able to identify at least one additional educational use of their Centre, the most common being daytime sessions for local schools (27 Centres). In 14 cases, the Centres were used by the sports club to educate their youth team (Academy) players. Eleven Centres were used for work connected with Excellence in Cities or Education Action Zones. Twelve Centres were used to provide for specific groups of ‘at risk’ young people, such as looked-after children, pupils at risk of exclusion from school and young offenders.

Other educational uses, each mentioned by a small minority of Centre Managers, included pupil, teacher and adult education courses. Examples were: literacy and numeracy summer schools; INSET courses for teachers; mentor training; use by the careers’ service; links with local FE colleges to provide facilities for their students; courses for parents of pupils attending the Centre; family literacy/numeracy courses; and use by the sports club for training players and stewards.

2.1.1 Operating capacity

We asked Centre Managers a series of questions about their current operating capacity for *Playing for Success*. The information they provided showed that Centres varied considerably in this respect. However, the ‘average’ *Playing for Success* Centre was open four days a week, and took pupils for between 20 and 30 hours in total (KS3 pupils were offered slightly longer courses, on average, than were pupils in KS2). Most Centres ran two (usually two-hour) sessions each evening and could accommodate from 16 to 20 pupils in any one session.

The questionnaire also asked how many schools and pupils would have attended the Centre during the 2001–2 school year. (Because the questionnaire was sent out in May 2002, Centre Managers were asked to provide projections for the summer term.) One Centre Manager did not provide the requested information, so the figures below are based on data from 57 Centres.

Table 2.1 Number of pupils taking part during 2001–2

Pupils	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Total
Key Stage 2	3274	3608	3863	10745
Key Stage 3	2369	2686	2734	7789
Total	5643	6294	6597	18534

Based on responses from 57 Centre Managers who completed this part of the questionnaire. Not all Centres were operating during all three terms. Figures for Summer 2002 are estimates.

Table 2.1 shows that over 18500 pupils took part in *Playing for Success* during the 2001–2 school year and that just over half (58 per cent) of the pupils who attended were of primary-school age. The number of pupils served rose each term, reflecting the fact that some of the new Centres were beginning to operate.

We also asked Centre Managers how many schools they served in the 2001–2 school year. Seven Centre Managers did not provide this information, so Table 2.2 provides information on the number of schools served by 51 Centres in each of the three school terms.

Table 2.2 Number of schools taking part during 2001–2

Schools	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Primary/middle deemed primary	240	286	297
Secondary/middle deemed secondary	144	172	174
Special	8	7	9
Total	392	465	480

*Based on responses from 51 Centre Managers who completed this part of the questionnaire.
Not all Centres were operating during all three terms. Figures for Summer 2002 are estimates.*

Table 2.2 shows that between 392 and 480 schools participated in *Playing for Success* each term at the 51 Centres. It is also noticeable that the number of schools served rose each term, as new Centres began operating. Only a minority of Centres worked with special schools.

Some Centres worked with the same schools throughout the year, whereas others took pupils from a different group of schools each term. We therefore included a separate question asking Centre Managers to tell us how many schools in total sent pupils to *Playing for Success* courses during the current school year. All of the Centre Managers answered this question. In total, the 58 Centres accommodated pupils from 1103 schools during 2001–2.

2.1.2 Year-groups attending *Playing for Success*

The original intention of *Playing for Success* was to focus on pupils in Years 6–9, but we were aware that some Centres were taking other year-groups (especially Year 5) in response to local demand. The questionnaire asked which year-groups each Centre took for *Playing for Success*. The answers to this question are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Year-groups attending *Playing for Success*

	Number of Centres
Year 5	53
Year 6	55
Year 7	49
Year 8	53
Year 9	34
Other year-group(s)	6

Based on responses from 58 Centre Managers who completed the questionnaire. Centre Managers could make more than one response.

Table 2.3 shows that the most popular year-groups served were Year 6 (55 Centres), Year 5 (53 Centres) and Year 8 (53 Centres). In addition, most Centres included Year 7 pupils and over half of the Centres took pupils in Year 9. Most of those accommodating other year-groups said they were taking older pupils (i.e. those in key stage 4).

2.2 Mentors and staffing ratios

Playing for Success Centres are staffed by a Centre Manager, who is a qualified teacher, plus a team of mentors/tutors. Some Centres employ others, such as teachers, mentor coordinators, IT technicians and administrative staff.

We could have asked numerous questions about staffing, but in order to keep the questionnaire to a reasonable length we decided to focus on two main areas of interest: the use of mentors and the ratio of pupils to each adult/mentor.

All but four of the Centre Managers said they used mentors for *Playing for Success*. The most common source of mentors was higher education courses, including students on teacher training courses (41 Centres). Twenty two Centres were using secondary school students (sometimes referred to as ‘peer mentors’) and a further 12 were using sixth form or FE students. Ten Centres had recruited business mentors. Other sources of mentors mentioned by a few Centres included: learning support staff; volunteer teachers; community volunteers; people working at the sports venue; and even club supporters.

Taking into account the presence of mentors and Centre staff, the average ratio of pupils to adults/mentors was 4:1 for pupils attending *Playing for Success*. Although the majority of Centres offered ratios at this level or better, pupil-adult/mentor ratios varied considerably between Centres.

2.2.1 Computer equipment

One of the features of *Playing for Success* is that the Study Support Centres should be equipped with good computer facilities. The questionnaire asked Centre Managers how many computers were available for use by pupils and whether the computers had internet access. We also asked whether the pupils used Integrated Learning Systems (such as *Plato*, *Successmaker* or *Global*).

Again, computer facilities reflected the fact that Centres were at different stages of development and were able to accommodate different numbers of pupils. On average, Centres had 18 computers available for pupils to use. The number of computers ranged from none in two Centres (one of which was awaiting the installation of its 18 computers) to 40 in another. In most cases, internet access was available on all the Centre's computers. About a third (19) of the Centres used Integrated Learning Systems.

2.3 What did the Centres aim to do?

The questionnaire included a section asking Centres about their aims. The national aims of *Playing for Success* are to provide support for numeracy, literacy, ICT, homework and to improve pupils' attitudes and motivation. However, Centres do have discretion over the emphasis placed on each of these aims, and some may wish to address additional aims in response to local needs.

A majority of Centre Managers (43) said that they did place emphasis on one particular aspect of *Playing for Success*. The most common emphasis, mentioned by 11 Centre Managers, was on ICT skills.

When asked whether they had any additional aims, a third of Centre Managers said they emphasised building pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Additional aims mentioned by a minority of Centre Managers were: the development of key skills; communication and social skills; and teamwork. Eleven Centre Managers (mostly from Innovation Centres) said that they aimed to develop pupils' sporting skills.

2.3.1 Focus within numeracy

We asked respondents to explain the focus of their Centre's programme in numeracy. The answers revealed that mental arithmetic was the main focus in over a third of programmes. Small numbers of Centres emphasised each of the following numeracy skills: data handling and basic statistics; computation; problem-solving; and estimation. Some Centre Managers added comments about their approach to teaching numeracy. For example, eleven said that they used ICT packages to teach numeracy and ten pointed out that the content of their numeracy programme was tailored to meet the needs identified by individual pupils during a target-setting process.

2.3.2 Focus within literacy

In answer to a similar question about literacy skills, the most common areas identified were writing (25 Centres) and reading (24 Centres). Literacy skills emphasised by a smaller number of Centres included spelling, grammar and speaking and listening. Nine Centre Managers mentioned the use of software packages to teach literacy skills.

2.3.3 Focus within ICT

Two main areas were highlighted in the answers to the question about the Centres' focus in the area of ICT. These were using the internet (22 Centres) and word processing skills (18 Centres). Other areas mentioned by fewer Centre Managers included *Powerpoint* presentations, desk-top publishing, email and spreadsheets. In addition, a few Centre Managers mentioned that pupils gained familiarity with a range of computer programmes and learned how to use peripherals, such as digital cameras.

2.3.4 Other areas of the learning programme

The questionnaire invited Centre Managers to tell us about other areas emphasised within their learning programme. Most of the Centre Managers responded to this question. The most common answers were: teamwork/working with others; confidence-building; sports skills; and communication/social skills. A few mentioned offering work in specific areas of the curriculum (notably in health education, but also in expressive arts and citizenship) and/or in relation to developing pupils' metacognitive skills (e.g. study skills, multiple intelligences and accelerated learning).

2.4 Using the environment and medium of sport

We were interested to know how Centre Managers were using the environment and medium of sport in their programme of learning. All Centre Managers answered this question and each identified several ways in which they used the sporting context. The most common strategies were to use sports-themed tasks (50 Centres) and to arrange a tour of the venue (45 Centres). Other strategies mentioned by fewer Centres included: enabling pupils to meet players; getting pupils to compile player profiles; using the ground for practical tasks; and using sports-themed software. Fourteen Centres offered opportunities for pupils to play sport, including coaching in sports skills. This was a particular feature of the Innovation Centres. Twelve Centre Managers mentioned that they offered club merchandise or match tickets as incentives and rewards.

Some Centre Managers provided further details on how they used sport or the sports venue as a learning resource. For example, one Centre Manager said: *'The whole stadium becomes the classroom, including the media suite, directors rooms, press area and executive boxes. We do a tour of the sports venue and [the pupils meet] players who mentor and attend graduation/presentations.'*

Another said: *'All pupils have, wherever possible, the opportunity to meet a first team player and experience a match. The learning programme is football-related. Pupils also have one coaching session during their ten-week programme.'*

Players were most often involved during the celebration events, but a few Centre Managers reported that players were more directly involved in the Centre's learning activities, usually by being interviewed by pupils or (occasionally) in a mentoring capacity.

Use of the sports venue for practical tasks included: mathematics trails; counting the seats and measuring the pitch; using gate receipts and sales in the shop, restaurant and kiosks for work on numeracy and data handling. The sports venues were also used for work with digital cameras; and visits to the club's museum, boardroom or pressroom could form the basis for ICT, history and literacy work.

Centre-based tasks included: writing match reports, researching and writing player biographies; using away matches as a basis for map work; designing a poster or board game; compiling a sports magazine or match programme; composing a football song; writing letters to players and completing sports-related worksheets. Several Centre Managers also mentioned using sports-themed tasks as a means of teaching pupils how to search the internet.

2.5 Celebration events

All but three Centres had held a celebration event to congratulate pupils on having completed their course. These were usually held at the end of the course or shortly thereafter, and included the presentation of certificates and prizes. In most cases, celebration events were held at the sports venue, but a few Centres held these events in other places, including schools. Celebration events were usually attended by parents/family members, players, school staff and club representatives as well as by Centre staff and pupils. Some events were attended by others, such as local councillors, sponsors' representatives and members of the press.

One Centre Manager explained the importance of the Celebration for those involved: *'This is an integral part of Playing for Success. Parents, teachers, club officials, college representatives and LEA officers attend. The students show their work individually on computer, then they act as a mentor/guide to a guest. The club sets a challenge for teams to accomplish and the students present their response. At the moment our secondary students are designing pages for our matchday magazine. All students attending for 90 per cent and achieving their targets receive a certificate and a prize from the club.'*

One Centre Manager highlighted the fact that his Celebration events were linked with a live (basketball) game. *'All pupils and family attend and certificates are presented by the head coach. They attend the game – pupils are introduced to the crowd at half time.'*

2.6 Feedback to schools

It is important for schools to receive feedback on the progress their pupils make at the Centre. The questionnaire listed different kinds of feedback and asked Centre Managers to indicate which they provided for schools. The answers to this question are shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 **Type of feedback provided to schools**

	N
Oral feedback to teachers during the course	53
Oral feedback to teachers at the end of the course	42
Written feedback during the course	29
Written feedback at the end of the course	46
Displays/collections of pupils' work	55
Other forms of feedback	28

Based on responses from 58 Centre Managers who completed the questionnaire. Centre Managers could make more than one response.

All Centre Managers said that they provided at least one kind of feedback to schools, and several provided more than one kind. However, as the table shows, two methods were used by the majority of Centres: displays and collections of pupils' work; and oral feedback during the course. In addition, the majority of Centres provided oral and/or written feedback at the end of the course and half provided written feedback during the course. About half the Centre Managers identified other forms of feedback supplied to schools. These included a CD Rom for schools containing their pupils' ICT work, individual pupil reports and printouts from computer packages showing assessment results. Six Centre Managers pointed out that they invited teachers into the Centre so they could see pupils' progress for themselves. One Centre set up individual web pages for each participating school providing feedback on progress which could be accessed from the Centre's website.

2.7 Main challenges during the year

We asked Centre Managers to list their major challenges of the 2001–2 academic year. All 58 Centre Managers answered this question. They highlighted a wide range of issues, but it was clear that relationships with stakeholders (especially staff of the sports venues) were a particular source of concern.

Several football clubs faced a period of financial difficulty this year, particularly those whose income was severely reduced as a result of the collapse of sponsorship and television deals. One Centre Manager explained that her football club had been in debt, resulting in a take-over and resignation of senior staff. Not surprisingly, one of the main challenges for this Manager had been: *‘Forging constructive links with the club whilst they were in crisis.’* Another had experienced a change of club manager. Unfortunately, the new manager seemed to be less supportive of *Playing for Success* than his predecessor, and this had caused difficulties in gaining access to players.

Accommodation was the focus for a number of comments. Being without a permanent base caused disruption for some. One Centre Manager described: *‘The weekly routine of having to dismantle and rectify the Centre for weekends.’* Another reported: *‘Operating in a bar area and therefore not being able to deliver full ICT training.’* A third expressed frustration with: *‘Being unable to plan sessions in advance due to the club using our room during the playing season. We sometimes don’t have [access to] our room and are located elsewhere.’*

Setting up a new Centre or relocating to different accommodation had caused major challenges for some Managers. For example, one described: *‘Taking the PfS programme out to schools while the Centre in the new stand was being built’*. One Centre had been temporarily relocated from a football ground to a local school. Unfortunately, the school was somewhat inaccessible, and therefore the numbers of pupils attending the Centre had dropped. In addition to problems caused by relocation, one or two Managers mentioned their difficulties in dealing with a lack of physical space in the Centre.

Other challenges, each mentioned by a few Centre Managers included staffing issues (such as being unable to appoint or replace staff) and general organisational problems with the timing of sessions and arranging transport for pupils. There were also some indications that a growth in school-based study support schemes was beginning to affect demand for places at the Centres.

A few Managers wrote about the challenge of fund-raising or expressed their concern about securing the Centre’s financial viability as the level of DfES funding is reduced. One reported a ten per cent budget cut this year, and another said: *‘Our DfES grant reduces £10k this year and £20k next so it is important that the Centre continues to be a valuable asset within the community.’* Some had begun asking schools to contribute to the funding of the Centre, and had found this quite challenging (especially in areas where schools had received funding to develop their own study support). More generally, one Centre Manager admitted: *‘Trying to raise funding for a purpose-built classroom has been tough.’*

2.8 Main achievements during the year

The questionnaire also asked Centre Managers to list their major achievements of the 2001–2 academic year. All Centre Managers answered this question, and most were able to identify at least two or three achievements.

Achievements fell into five main areas: developing the Centre's programme and facilities; pupils' response to the learning programme; staff recruitment and development; raising the Centre's profile; and positive relationships with stakeholders. Each of these is examined in more detail below.

2.8.1 Developing the learning programme and facilities

Many of the Centre Managers highlighted achievements related to the Centre's learning programme and/or the facilities on offer in the Centre. Programme developments included compiling a set of appropriate tasks (for newer Centres) and diversifying further into tasks requiring different learning approaches, skill levels or in different areas of the curriculum (for more established Centres). One Centre reported several new developments of this kind, including: *'Multi-media authoring as a vehicle for presenting pupils' achievements and the introduction of digital video editing.'*

One Centre had formed strong links with their library service, in order to provide access to wide-ranging reading material. Another had launched three new online products: a CD Rom on health-related issues; a monitoring and evaluation system and a portal for the Quality in Study Support (QiSS) 'U-Study.net'. A third reported: *'The development of new initiatives in the Centre including international links: a visit to Barcelona and video conferencing.'*

Eight Centre Managers mentioned an expansion in their provision, either as part of *Playing for Success* and/or for other users. Some had expanded to take on different age-groups or to cater for children with special needs. For example, one Centre noted its achievement in taking on gifted and talented pupils and working with a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties.

Eight Centre Managers mentioned as one of their achievements that they were participating in the Quality in Study Support accreditation scheme, which requires study support Centres to demonstrate that they meet a set of quality criteria. Most had achieved, or were about to achieve, 'emerging' status (the first level of award offered by QiSS).

Centre Managers who had moved to new accommodation mentioned this as one of their main achievements. One Centre Manager expressed her relief at *'Getting the building work finished after a year's delay!'*. Another identified one of her Centre's achievements as: *'Successfully relocating without disrupting the learning programme.'* A third was pleased to report that, after a period spent occupying different spaces in and near the football ground, her Centre had been *'Allocated a prime spot in the new stadium'*.

2.8.2 Pupils' responses to the learning programme

Several Centre Managers mentioned pupils' reactions to the learning programme as one of their main achievements of the year. This was evident in the pupils' enjoyment of the activities, the quality of their work and improvements in self-confidence. The manager

of one recently-opened Centre reported: *‘Such a successful two terms where young people have obviously enjoyed their time and benefited greatly.’*

Some Centre Managers noted their success in achieving high attendance levels. For example, one Centre Manager was celebrating a: *‘Top class attendance record’* and several others made reference to their ‘excellent’ attendance figures. Because pupils attend *Playing for Success* voluntarily, the level of pupil attendance is an important indicator for Centre Managers.

2.8.3 Staff recruitment and development

Improvements in staffing were the focus of several of the Centre Managers’ comments. They felt that they had made good progress in recruiting suitable staff and mentors and providing them with induction and other training opportunities. To take one example, a Centre Manager reported that her Centre had successfully built up a team of teachers and mentors to work at the Centre. All the Centre’s staff had received training in literacy, numeracy, first aid and child protection.

2.8.4 Raising the Centre’s profile

Developing the Centre’s identity and raising its profile were major achievements noted by a few of the Centre Managers. For newly-established Centres, a well-publicised launch was an occasion for celebration. For example, one Centre Manager highlighted one of the main achievements as: *‘our official opening with Minister Stephen Timms.’*

Some of the more established Centres reported that their work had gained local or even national recognition as a focus for innovation and community service. One Centre Manager reported that his Centre had won the “ICT Beyond the Classroom” award at the British Educational Technology show. Another had achieved: *‘Winner of the “Big Issue Community Award”; finalist in the “National Business in the Community Awards”; and teacher finalist in “Teacher of the Year” National Teaching Awards.’*

One Manager drew attention to the positive reputation of the *Playing for Success* programme, pointing out that it had become: *‘A scheme which is respected in the local community and has gained national recognition.’*

2.8.5 Relationships with stakeholders

Centre Managers mentioned achievements in the area of relationships with the key stakeholders, especially schools, but also parents, the sports venue, the LEA, sponsors and other partners. Positive feedback from schools and an increased demand to take part are important indicators that the Centres are getting it right. For example, one Centre Manager noted: *‘A great deal of praise and acknowledgement from schools attending the Centre.’* Several Managers explained that they were now fully booked and had to operate a waiting list. For example, one Centre Manager said: *‘Demand now exceeds supply as word of mouth has spread and our reputation precedes us.’*

In relation to parents, one Manager said: *‘Parents and pupils identify the significant benefits that Playing for Success has had on the child and family as a whole. Learning is becoming more valued and there is a greater sense that it is “cool” to be successful.’*

Some noted good relationships with the sports venue, especially in relation to increased player involvement. One Manager was pleased to report: *‘Some breakthroughs in getting players into the Centre more often.’* Another was celebrating: *‘Finding a source of additional income until 2005 and securing the backing of the club and LEA to expand current facilities and developing partnerships for capital funding.’*

2.9 Future developments for the Centres

The questionnaire asked Centre Managers to outline their plans for the future development of their Centre, both as part of *Playing for Success* and for other initiatives.

The Centre Managers reported a wide range of development plans as part of *Playing for Success*, most commonly focusing on developing their learning programme and increasing the Centre’s capacity (either to take more pupils or to expand the length of time that pupils could attend). In addition, almost half mentioned plans to expand their provision of other educational services, including daytime, weekend and holiday courses.

Some Centre Managers said they wanted to devote time and energy to strengthening their links with schools. Others had plans to upgrade their facilities. For example, 12 Centre Managers mentioned expanding or upgrading the Centre’s computer equipment and nine outlined plans to move to a new accommodation where they would be able to run a *Playing for Success* Centre in their own space.

Income generation was a key priority for Centres faced with a reduction in central government funding. As one Centre Manager said: *‘The aim is for full time usage – children mainly but we need to take anyone who will pay.’* Another commented: *‘Unless we can attract alternative sources of income then we will have to reduce the amount of student support offered through Playing for Success to match the grant awarded.’*

Several Centres were planning to develop their networks both within and beyond the local community. Networking with other *Playing for Success* Centres was a priority for some, including a plan mentioned by the manager of a Centre linked with a cricket club to establish a forum for colleagues running Centres associated with cricket. Managers were keenly aware of the need to make their Centre an integral part of study support provision within their local authority. Newer Centres were planning to develop their relationships with key stakeholders, to provide better feedback on pupil progress and to publicise themselves more effectively. Longer-established Centres were looking for further opportunities, including setting up ‘offshoot’ study support Centres, offering access to learning resources via their websites and developing their national and even international links.

2.10 Summary: About the Study Support Centres

The information in this chapter is based on questionnaire returns from all 58 *Playing for Success* Centres operating in May 2002.

Operation and location

- The majority of the 58 Centres (48) were operating a ‘full’ *Playing for Success* model and the remaining ten were innovation Centres.
- The majority of the Centres (45) were associated with football but some were associated with one or more other sports, including rugby, cricket and basketball.
- The majority (46 Centres) were based at the main sports venue and 40 had their own, dedicated space.
- Most (53) Centres were being used for other educational purposes, especially daytime sessions for local schools.
- Although Centres varied considerably in their operating capacity, the ‘typical’ Centre was open four days a week, and took pupils for between 20 and 30 hours in total. Most Centres ran two sessions each evening and could accommodate from 16 to 20 pupils per session.
- In total, the Centres took over 18500 pupils from 1103 schools during 2001–2.

Mentors, staffing ratios and computers

- All but four of the Centre Managers said they used mentors for *Playing for Success*. The most common source of mentors was higher education courses and secondary schools.
- The average ratio of pupils to mentors and staff was 4:1.
- On average, Centres had 18 computers available for pupils to use. Most had internet access available on all computers and 19 Centres used Integrated Learning Systems.

Centres’ aims

- Most Centre Managers said they had a particular emphasis within the aims of *Playing for Success*, especially on ICT and building pupils’ self-confidence/self-esteem.

- Mental arithmetic was the main area addressed within numeracy. In literacy, Centres tended to emphasise writing and reading skills. The focus within ICT was on using the internet and developing word processing skills.
- Teamwork, sports skills and communication/social skills were each emphasised by a minority of Centres.

Using the environment and medium of sport

- Centre Managers used the sporting context in a variety of ways. Most courses included the use of sports-themed learning tasks and a tour of the venue.
- Fourteen Centres offered opportunities for pupils to play sport.
- Players were most commonly involved during celebration events, which were held at the end of the course.

Feedback to schools

- All Centre Managers provided some kind of feedback to schools about their pupils' progress. Most used displays and collections of pupils' work and oral feedback during the course. Most also provided oral and/or written feedback at the end of the course.

Challenges, achievements and future developments

- In response to a question about their main challenges, Centre Managers highlighted a wide range of issues, but it was clear that relationships with stakeholders (especially staff of the sports venues) were a particular source of concern. Some of the more established Centres were facing a challenge of raising income to compensate for a reduction in their central government funding.
- The Centre Managers' main achievements related to five main areas: developing the Centre's programme and facilities; receiving positive responses from pupils; recruiting and developing staff; raising the Centre's profile; and developing positive relationships with stakeholders.
- The most common future developments identified by Centre Managers concerned developing the Centres' facilities and learning programmes, and increasing their capacity to take more pupils and other users.

3 Who attends *Playing for Success*?

0

This chapter describes the pupils who attended *Playing for Success* Study Support Centres in terms of how they were selected, and their characteristics such as year group and gender. We also consider the pupils' rates of attendance at the Centres and the extent of pupils' interest in sport.

Most of the information summarised here was provided by Centre Managers with the help of the schools sending pupils to the Centres. Some of the information came from link teachers at the schools taking part in *Playing for Success*, and some came from the pupils themselves.

The sample comprised 12 out of the 54 Centres open in the Autumn of 2001. The Centres participating in the evaluation came from three main groups: Centres who volunteered to take part following involvement in the evaluation last year; Centres who were unable to take part in the evaluation last year for a range of reasons; and newly established Centres.

3.1 Pupil selection

We asked Centre Managers to identify all the schools sending pupils to the Centres in the evaluation period (i.e. during the Spring term 2002). We sent a short questionnaire to the link teacher in each of these schools, just after the summer half term. (The questionnaire was sent out after the pupils had completed their courses, so that teachers would be in a position to comment on the impact of their involvement.) The questionnaires were sent to 124 schools. In total, 91 questionnaires were returned, 51 from primary and middle deemed primary schools and 40 from secondary schools. This represents an overall response rate of 73 per cent.

0 The number of questionnaires returned per Centre ranged from one to 15. In part, this reflects the fact that at any one time, different Centres were working with different numbers of schools. During the evaluation period, the range of schools that each of the 12 Centres worked with ranged from two to 23.

1

As mentioned above, the school questionnaires were sent to the *Playing for Success* link teacher at each school. Responses from schools were completed by people holding a range of different posts, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and class or form teachers.

Pupils were nominated by their schools to attend *Playing for Success*. However, we should emphasise that attendance was voluntary – pupils could choose whether or not they wanted to take up the offer of a place. Centres provided their own individual guidelines to schools about pupil selection, but in most cases, schools had a degree of discretion over their nomination of pupils to attend.

The school questionnaire included a series of closed questions about the criteria used in selecting pupils to attend *Playing for Success*. A number of possible criteria were listed, and teachers were invited to add any others that they had used. The most frequent responses are given in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Which criteria did you use to select pupils to attend the Centre?

	%
Children that teachers considered would benefit from the initiative	90
Children with low self esteem/lacking in confidence	67
Children underachieving in relation to their ability	54
Children who showed an interest in the scheme	46
Children who lacked motivation towards school work	42
Children with good attendance at school	24
Children with learning difficulties	21
Children showing a strong interest in football	13
Children with poor fluency in English	12
Children with poor attendance at school	3
Other criteria	10
Missing data	0

Based on responses from 91 schools. Percentages do not add to 100 because teachers could make more than one response.

0

1 Teachers typically indicated that they used between three and five selection criteria for *Playing for Success*, suggesting that they were taking a range of factors into account. The table shows that teachers most commonly selected pupils whom they considered would benefit from the initiative. Ninety per cent of all teachers used this broad category in their selection process. Over two-thirds of teachers selected pupils with low self-esteem or lacking in self confidence.

2

3 Over half of the teachers selected pupils whom they considered to be underachieving in relation to their ability. One teacher commented that selection for *Playing for Success* did not label pupils as underachieving, saying: ‘No child felt “less able” because they were chosen, and no child was teased because they were having “extra lessons”.’

4

5 Forty-six per cent of the teachers took into account the level of interest the pupils themselves showed in the scheme. (Several teachers noted that many pupils hoped to be selected, and they mentioned the ‘kudos’ afforded to those given the opportunity to take part.)

6

7 The table also shows that 13 per cent of teachers considered pupils’ interest in football when selecting pupils for *Playing for Success*. This was rarely the sole

criterion, but was usually used in conjunction with at least three or four others. One teacher commented: *'Football is an important motivator for our children. They were proud to be chosen and felt part of the club.'*

8

9 We also asked teachers if they had used assessment results to select pupils. The majority of the 91 schools (61 per cent) had done so. Most of them used National Curriculum Assessment results, while a few used other assessments, such as CAT scores or school-based assessment results.

10

3.2 The pupils attending *Playing for Success*

- 0 The Centre Managers, with the help of schools, provided a range of information about pupils attending the Centres during the evaluation period. The Centres provided information on a total of 1149 pupils: 56 per cent of these were in key stage 2 and 44 per cent in key stage 3. Table 3.2 shows the year groups of the pupils on whom data were collected during the Spring term 2002.

Table 3.2 Pupils attending *Playing for Success*

Year group	%
Primary	
5	14
6	42
Secondary	
7	22
8	10
9	12
Unknown year group	<1

Based on responses relating to 1149 pupils. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

In Chapter 2, we established that Centres were taking pupils from a range of age-groups, most commonly in key stages 2 and 3. The table shows that many of the pupils attending the 12 Centres in the Spring of 2002 were in Year 6. A smaller percentage of Year 5 pupils also took part in *Playing for Success* courses. At secondary level, a range of year groups participated, most commonly pupils in Year 7. The oldest pupils recorded as taking part were in Year 9.

Table 3.3 shows some of the other characteristics of pupils attending *Playing for Success* in the Spring of 2002.

Table 3.3 Pupil characteristics

		Key Stage		
		2	3	Total
Variable	Category	%	%	%
Gender	Male	53	56	54
	Female	47	44	46
	unknown	0	<1	<1
Special Educational Needs	No SEN	45	57	50
	Pupils with SEN (concern identified)	17	10	14
	Pupils with SEN (statement)	1	2	1
	unknown	38	31	35
Free School Meals	Entitled to FSM	13	20	16
	Not entitled to FSM	36	39	37
	unknown	52	42	47
Ethnicity	White	76	71	74
	Ethnic minority	25	25	25
	unknown	0	4	2
English Language	English first language	77	73	75
	English not first language	15	8	12
	unknown	8	19	13

Based on responses relating to 642 KS2 and 507 KS3 pupils. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

This table shows that 54 per cent of the pupils attending the 12 Centres were boys. The proportion of boys attending was slightly higher in key stage 3.

We were interested to find out about other characteristics of the pupils, such as whether they had special needs, were entitled to free school meals, their ethnic background and fluency in English. These details were gathered by the Centres from the schools. Some Centre Managers had difficulty in obtaining the more detailed background information from their partner schools, and consequently there is a considerable amount of missing data. Nevertheless, more data was provided on the special educational needs, ethnicity

and English as an additional language characteristics of pupils than was available last year.

It is important to note that year-on-year comparisons between the levels of some characteristics depend on the amount of information available. Care must therefore be taken in the interpretation of data relating to the 'profile' of pupil characteristics apparent in different years.

This year, there were considerable improvements in the numbers of pupils for whom Centres provided information relating to special educational needs. (This information was not known for over two-thirds of pupils in 2001.) However, there were still 35 per cent of pupils for whom Centres were unable to establish whether or not they had special educational needs. Nevertheless, it is clear that over fourteen per cent of the pupils attending the Centres had identified special educational needs.

We were interested to know whether or not pupils were entitled to free school meals. This is frequently used in research as an indicator of social deprivation. Unfortunately, despite improvements in the levels of data provided by Centres, details about entitlement to free school meals were unavailable for 47 per cent of pupils.

Overall, twenty-five per cent of pupils were identified as being from other than 'White European' backgrounds. Due to the low proportion of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, we were forced to adopt a fairly crude category of 'ethnic minority' in our analysis of the impact of ethnic differences. These pupils came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest proportion (seven per cent) being Pakistani. There were smaller numbers from Indian (six per cent), Black Caribbean (three per cent), Black African (two per cent) and Bangladeshi backgrounds (one per cent).

About twelve per cent of pupils were identified as having English as an additional language.

3.3 Pupils' attendance at *Playing for Success*

Table 3.4 shows the length of the courses offered by the participating Centres to pupils in key stages 2 and 3.

Table 3.4 **Length of course in hours**

	Key Stage	
	2	3
	Number of Centres	Number of Centres
Less than 15 hours	2	1
15 to 19 hours	5	4
20 to 34 hours	1	2
35+ hours	3	1
Length of course not known	1	2
Total Centres running courses	12	10

Based on data from 12 Centres.

Most Centres accommodated pupils from both key stages. There was a wide range of course lengths identified by the 12 participating Centres, ranging from less than 15 hours to over 35 hours. Although Centres tended to offer the same length courses to all pupils, there were some differences within Centres between groups attending on different days of the week and the length of course was also sometimes affected by match fixtures, staff illness and other events.

The table shows that the most common course length for both primary and secondary pupils was from 15 to 19 hours. Only one Centre said they were running a course of 20 hours at either key stage. Last year's evaluation indicated that 20 hours was the most popular length of course for both key stages. The shorter course length this year is a reflection of the early timing of Easter in 2002 which led to a correspondingly short Spring term.

Table 3.5 shows the proportion of pupils attending courses of different lengths, and the percentage of the course pupils attended.

Table 3.5 Pupils' attendance at the Centres

		Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Total
Variable	Category	%	%	%
Length of course (hours)	Less than 15	31	24	28
	15–19	34	36	35
	20–34	19	31	24
	35+	16	9	13
Percentage of course attended per pupil (to the nearest 5 per cent)	Up to 50 per cent	6	12	9
	55 to 75 per cent	12	13	12
	80 to 95 per cent	39	31	35
	100 per cent	43	44	43
	Percentage of course attendance data missing	1	<1	1

Based on responses relating to 1149 pupils. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

In line with the data supplied at Centre-level, this table shows that most pupils attended a Centre offering a course of between 15 and 19 hours.

The Centre Managers kept a note of each pupil's attendance at their Centre during the Spring term, 2002. This, together with the information on course length, enabled us to calculate the proportion of the course that each pupil attended. The table shows that the majority of pupils (78 per cent) attended for at least 80 per cent of the course and that 43 per cent of pupils attended for 100 per cent of the available time.

- 0 There was a significant difference in attendance between key stage 2 and 3 pupils ($p < 0.05$). Although a minority of pupils attended less than 50 per cent of the course, older pupils were more likely to be poor attenders. Twelve per cent of key stage 3 pupils attended less than 50 per cent of the course, compared with only six per cent of key stage 2 pupils.

3.4 Pupils' interest in sport

We wanted to know whether pupils attending *Playing for Success* were interested in sport, and to consider whether there were any differences related to pupil characteristics such as age, gender or ethnicity. In previous years we had asked pupils whether or not they were interested in football. This year we changed the question wording in response to the expansion of *Playing for Success* to Centres associated with other sports.

Pupils were first asked whether or not they were interested in sport (yes, no, not sure) and then asked about the sports that they liked best. Table 3.6 shows the level of interest in sport among pupils who had just begun attending *Playing for Success*. It is based on the answers from 319 pupils who completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires. These pupils attended ten of the 12 *Playing for Success* Centres.

Table 3.6 Pupils' interest in sport at the beginning of *Playing for Success*

		Interested in sport	Not interested in sport	Not sure	No response
		%	%	%	%
Key Stage	KS2	80	3	17	<1
	KS3	89	2	7	<1
Gender	Boys	91	1	9	<1
	Girls	79	5	17	<1
Ethnicity	White	84	2	14	<1
	Ethnic minority	86	5	9	3
	Ethnicity data missing	89	0	11	<1
Total	All pupils	85	3	13	<1

Based on responses from 319 pupils attending Playing for Success. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding. Results are based on pupils with pre-and post-course questionnaires.

Table 3.6 shows a very high level of interest in sport among pupils who attended *Playing for Success*. Overall, 85 per cent of pupils expressed an interest in sport at the beginning of the course.

There was a statistically significant difference in the extent to which boys and girls reported being interested in sport (91 per cent of boys, compared with 79 per cent of girls). There were no significant differences in the levels of interest in sport reported by pupils in different key stages, or from different ethnic groups.

The post-course questionnaire contained the same question. This indicated that pupils expressed a similar degree of interest in sport at the pre- and post-course stage.

The second question about sports asked pupils which sport, if any, they liked best. The questionnaire listed five sports and invited pupils to add any other sports that they liked. Pupils were able to give more than one response. Table 3.7 shows the results from this question.

Table 3.7 The sports pupils liked best at the beginning of *Playing for Success*

Sport	Total pupils
	%
Football	74
Basketball	32
Gymnastics	24
Rugby	23
Cricket	20
Another sport, including:	40
Swimming	10
Tennis	7
Netball	7
No response	5

Based on pre-course responses from 319 pupils attending Playing for Success. Percentages do not add to 100 because pupils could make more than one response. Results are based on pupils with pre-and post-course questionnaires.

Nine of the ten Centres were based in football clubs, and the tenth was associated with a rugby club. The table shows that most pupils said they liked football (74 per cent). Other sports attracted fewer pupils, although basketball was mentioned by 32 per cent of pupils. On average, pupils identified two sports that they liked. It is also evident that

pupils expressed an interest in a wide range of sports, with 40 per cent of pupils writing in another sport in addition to the five listed in the questionnaire. The most commonly-nominated additional sports were swimming, tennis and netball.

Analysis of the responses made by pupils with different characteristics revealed no statistically significant differences between primary and secondary pupils. However, there were differences related to pupils' gender and ethnic group.

Table 3.8 shows the sports that pupils with different gender and ethnicity characteristics said they liked best.

Table 3.8 Sports liked by pupils of different gender and ethnicity

Sport	Gender		Ethnicity	
	Boys	Girls	White	Ethnic minority
	%	%	%	%
Football	90	57	77	67
Basketball	29	35	29	42
Gymnastics	5	44	25	20
Rugby	38	8	28	9
Cricket	28	12	15	32
Another sport	36	44	38	47
No response	1	8	5	5

Based on pre-course responses from 319 pupils attending Playing for Success. Percentages do not add to 100 because pupils could make more than one response. Results are based on pupils with pre-and post-course questionnaires.

Table 3.8 reveals interesting differences in the sports preferences of girls and boys. There were statistically significant differences in the extent to which girls and boys reported liking four of the five sports, namely: football, rugby, gymnastics and cricket. Although football was the most popular sport among both boys and girls, it was clearly more popular among boys. Gymnastics was the only sport that was more popular among girls. The only sport that was almost equally popular among girls and boys was basketball (none of the Centres which these pupils attended was associated with basketball). Girls and boys were equally likely to write in another sport that they liked.

There were statistically significant differences in the extent to which pupils from different ethnic backgrounds reported liking two sports: namely cricket and rugby. Twenty-eight per cent of White pupils said they liked rugby, compared with nine per cent of pupils from ethnic minorities. On the other hand, 32 per cent of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds indicated that they liked cricket, compared with only 15 per cent of pupils from White backgrounds. Pupils from White and ethnic minority backgrounds were equally likely to write in another sport that they liked.

We asked pupils about the sports that they liked in the post-course, as well as in the pre-course, questionnaire. Comparing pupils' answers on these two occasions, we found that there was only one statistically significant change during this period – White pupils were more likely to report that they liked basketball at the end of their *Playing for Success* course than at the beginning.

In the final question in this section of the questionnaire, pupils were asked to write in the name of the sports team, if any, that they supported. (If pupils gave more than one answer, we coded the first team they named.) By comparing their answers with the Centre they attended, we were able to work out whether pupils supported their Centre's team. Table 3.9 shows the results from this question.

Table 3.9 Pupils' support for their Centre's or another sports team

		Support Centre team	Support another team	No response
		%	%	%
Key Stage	KS2	40	39	21
	KS3	40	44	16
Gender	Boys	40	49	12
	Girls	40	35	25
Ethnicity	White	49	33	18
	Ethnic minority	8	74	18
	Ethnicity data missing	22	44	33
Total	All pupils	40	42	18

Based on pre-course responses from 319 pupils attending Playing for Success. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding. Results are based on pupils with pre-and post-course questionnaires.

Table 3.9 shows that at the beginning of the *Playing for Success* course, 40 per cent of pupils said they supported their Centre's team, while 42 per cent supported another team. Analysis of the data by key stage revealed no significant difference in the responses given by primary and secondary pupils.

There were, however, significant differences in the responses given by boys and girls. While both boys and girls were equally likely to support the Centre team (both 40 per cent), girls were less likely to answer the question (25 per cent of girls did not respond, compared with 12 per cent of boys). Girls were also less likely to express support for a sports team other than the one associated with their Centre.

Analysis of the data in Table 3.9 by ethnic group revealed significant differences. Children of all ethnic backgrounds were equally likely to nominate a team that they supported. The difference is apparent in the support for the Centre's team. Strikingly, 49 per cent of White pupils supported the Centre's team, compared with only eight per cent of pupils from ethnic minorities. Conversely, only 33 per cent of White pupils stated that they supported another team, compared with 74 per cent of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. This is a much greater difference than found in previous years and may reflect the different profile of clubs and pupils participating in 2001–2.

This question was also included in the post-course questionnaire. Comparison of the responses pupils made before and after their involvement with *Playing for Success* revealed no significant differences.

3.5 Summary: Who attends *Playing for Success*?

This chapter has looked at the ways in which pupils were selected to attend *Playing for Success*, and has described the pupils attending in relation to some of their background characteristics. It has also considered attendance rates and reported pupils' interest in sport.

Selection for *Playing for Success*

- Teachers from 91 schools completed the school questionnaire.
- Schools typically used between three and five criteria when selecting pupils to attend *Playing for Success*.
- Teachers most commonly selected pupils they considered would benefit from the initiative. A high proportion of teachers also selected pupils with low self-esteem, and children underachieving in relation to their ability.
- Just under half of the schools considered the level of interest the children themselves showed in the scheme when deciding whom to nominate for involvement.

Characteristics of pupils attending the Centres

- The evaluation included data on 1149 pupils who attended *Playing for Success* during the Spring term 2002. Slightly more KS2 than KS3 pupils were involved in *Playing for Success* courses. Most primary pupils were in Year 6. Among secondary school pupils, the majority of pupils were in Year 7, although pupils from Years 8 and 9 also participated.
- As in the last two years, slightly more boys (54 per cent) than girls (46 per cent) attended the Centres.

- Substantially more data relating to pupil background was available this year than in previous years. Unfortunately there were still large quantities of missing information concerning special educational needs and eligibility for free school meals. Meaningful analysis of these data is therefore difficult. However, we do know that at least 15 per cent of the pupils attending *Playing for Success* had special educational needs; at least 16 per cent were eligible for free school meals.
- Twenty five per cent of pupils were identified as coming from ethnic minority backgrounds, and 12 per cent of pupils spoke English as an additional language.

Rates and length of attendance

- Most of courses offered during the Spring term 2002 were between 15 and 19 hours in length.
- The majority of pupils (78 per cent) attended for at least 80 per cent of the course, and 43 per cent of pupils attended for 100 per cent of the course.
- There was a significant difference in attendance between KS2 and KS3 pupils, with older pupils more likely to be poor attenders. Twelve per cent of KS3 pupils attended for less than 50 per cent of the course, compared with only six per cent of KS2 pupils.

Interest in sport

- The majority (85 per cent) of pupils said that they were interested in sport at beginning of the course.
- Boys were more likely than girls to be interested in sport.
- The analysis revealed significant differences related to gender and ethnic background in pupils' preferences for particular sports. Boys were more likely to say they liked football, rugby and cricket, whereas girls were more likely to say they liked gymnastics. There were no gender-related differences in pupils' interest in basketball.
- Pupils from White ethnic backgrounds were more likely to say they liked rugby, whereas pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to like cricket.

- At the beginning of the course, 40 per cent of pupils indicated that they supported the Centre's team, while 42 per cent of pupils said they supported another team. Pupils' responses to this question at the end of the course were not significantly different.
- Girls and boys were equally likely to support their Centre's team. Boys were more likely than girls to name a team they supported and to support a team other than the one associated with their Centre.
- Pupils from White ethnic backgrounds were more likely to say they supported the Centre's team than were pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Pupils from ethnic minorities were more likely to support a sports team other than the one associated with their Centre.

4 Expectations and experiences of *Playing for Success*

This chapter reports information on the expectations and experiences of *Playing for Success* from the point of view of the pupils themselves, their parents and their schools. We set out to find out what pupils and parents expected of the Centres and whether their experiences lived up to expectations. We also wanted to find out about schools' experiences of the initiative.

4.1 What did pupils think of the Centre?

The pupil attitude questionnaire ('What YOU think') was completed by almost a third of the pupils at the beginning and end of their courses. The information presented here is based on the responses of 319 pupils who attended the Centres and completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires.

Table 4.1 shows pupils' responses to a series of 'closed' questions about their Study Support Centre. The questionnaire invited pupils to give one of three responses to each item (yes, not sure, no). Since most of the pupils had strong opinions on these items, we have reported the percentage of pupils answering 'yes' to each item.

Table 4.1 What do you think of the Centre?

	Pre-course %	Post-course %
The Study Support Centre will be/was fun	92	93
The Study Support Centre will help/helped me to use a computer	83	90
The Study Support Centre will be/was interesting	87	88
The Study Support Centre will be/was a good idea for me	85	88
The Study Support Centre will help/helped me to be a more confident person	74	82
The Study Support Centre will help/helped me to be better at maths	76	77
The Study Support Centre will help/helped me to be better at writing	76	74
The Study Support Centre will help/helped me to be better at reading	70	73
The Study Support Centre will be/was boring	<1	4

Based on responses from 319 pupils who completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires.

Statements are listed in order of the proportion of pupils agreeing with each item in the post-course questionnaire.

The table shows that at the outset of the course, pupils had very high expectations of *Playing for Success*, and that the Centres lived up to their expectations in providing an enjoyable and interesting experience. At the end of the course, for example, 93 per cent considered the Centre to have been 'fun'; 88 per cent considered it to have been 'interesting' and 88 per cent thought it was 'a good idea for me'. These levels of pupils' satisfaction were very slightly lower than those achieved in the Centres last year.

However, the proportion of pupils saying that the Centre had helped them to become more self-confident (82 per cent) was the same as last year. For the last mentioned outcome, pupils' judgements of the Centre exceeded their expectations (before the course, 74 per cent of pupils said they expected the Centre to help them become a more confident person).

Pupils also had very high expectations in terms of helping their learning. At the beginning of the course, at least 70 per cent of pupils expected their numeracy, reading, writing and computer skills to be developed by attending *Playing for Success*.

After the course, the pupils' judgements matched their expectations with regard to help with mathematics, reading and writing. For mathematics and writing, this was an improvement on last year. More pupils felt that they had been helped to use a computer. Their judgements were more positive than their expectations at the beginning for computer skills – 90 per cent of pupils felt that the Centre had helped them to use a computer compared with 83 per cent who had expected this outcome. Patterns of expectations and experiences were very similar for all pupils regardless of key stage and gender.

We also asked pupils to tell us how else they would like the Study Support Centre to help them (the post-course version of the question asked ‘What else did the Centre help you to do or know?’). The coding of this open-ended question (Table 4.2) revealed that pupils took it as an opportunity to confirm answers that they had given to closed questions (Table 4.1).

Table 4.2 Additional comments on help provided by the Study Support Centre

	Pre-course %	Post-course %
Develop computer/internet skills	16	39
Improve literacy	30	23
Improve numeracy	19	20
Boost self-confidence	10	18
Develop interpersonal skills	4	12
Improve schoolwork in general	12	6
No response	17	7

Based on responses from 319 pupils who completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires. Percentages may sum to more than 100 because pupils could make more than one response.

Statements are listed in order of the proportion of pupils mentioning each benefit in the post-course questionnaire.

A number of other ways Centres could help were each mentioned by less than ten per cent of pupils.

The table shows that the most common way in which pupils felt that the Centre had helped them was with the development of computer/internet skills. Nearly 40 per cent of the pupils wrote a specific comment about the fact that the Centre had helped them in this respect. One pupil explained: ‘It helped to be able to use a computer like going on

Powerpoint and Internet Explorer.’ Another wrote: ‘*[The Centre helped me to] use the internet and Microsoft Publisher to do a leaflet.*’

Pupils also commented on improvements in literacy and numeracy skills (23 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively). As one pupil wrote: ‘*[The Centre helped me to] do maths better and quicker and realise I am not stupid but a bit slow at working out the answers.*’ Another pupil commented: ‘*[The Centre helped me to] be better at reading because I didn’t know a lot of words.*’

The Centres appear to have exceeded pupils’ expectations with regard to IT skills. At the beginning of the course, 16 per cent of pupils’ wrote that they hoped that the Centre would help them to improve their IT skills whereas, at the end of the course, 39 per cent commented that the Centre had helped them in this respect. The position was reversed for literacy skills – 30 per cent of the pupils said they wanted the Centre to help them develop their literacy skills whereas only 23 per cent of pupils commented that the Centre had helped them in this area.

About 18 per cent of pupils commented that the Centre had made them more self-confident. One pupil wrote: ‘*I am now a very confident person. I can now put up my hand and have a go without getting embarrassed.*’ Another said: ‘*[The Centre helped me to] learn how to work as a team and how to be more confident.*’ A third pupil commented: ‘*[The Centre helped me to] be more confident in lessons and start answering questions too. I never used to read my work out because I thought it would be wrong.*’

Other ways the Centre could help were mentioned, but by less than ten per cent of pupils. These included learning new things and improving study skills.

4.1.1 What did pupils like most about the Centre?

The final question in the pre-course questionnaire asked pupils what they were looking forward to most at the Study Support Centre. The parallel question in the post-course questionnaire asked them what they had liked most at the Centre. Pupils' answers to these open-ended questions are shown in Table 4.3.

0

1 Table 4.3 What are you looking forward to/did you like most at the Study
2 Support Centre?

	Pre-course %	Post-course %
Using computers/the internet	32	51
Sports-related aspects	30	19
The Centre staff	0	11
Social aspects	10	10
Learning new things	10	2
No response	18	5

Based on responses from 319 pupils who completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires.

Percentages may sum to more than 100 because pupils could make more than one response.

Statements are listed in order of the proportion of pupils mentioning each item in the post-course questionnaire.

A number of other aspects were each mentioned by less than ten per cent of pupils.

The responses to these open-ended questions once again highlight pupils' interest in using computers and the internet. After the course, just over half of the pupils who attended *Playing for Success* listed these as aspects of the Study Support Centre that they had enjoyed most. The Centres appear to have exceeded pupils' expectations in this regard – before the course, just under a third commented that they were looking forward to using computers/internet.

The pattern was reversed for sports-related topics. At the beginning of the course, 30 per cent of the pupils singled out sports-related aspects of the Centre as items that they were looking forward to the most. These included meeting players, attending matches and improving sports skills (in fact most of the Centres did not teach pupils sports skills). Fewer pupils (19 per cent) mentioned sports-related activities as the most enjoyable aspect at the end of the course. This difference between pre- and post-course stages could be because other aspects of attending *Playing for Success* had become more important to the pupils who were initially attracted by the link with sports, and/or because Centres did not provide as many sports-related activities as the pupils anticipated.

Ten per cent of pupils said that the thing that they had enjoyed most were the social aspects of the course, such as the opportunity to make new friends. Several other enjoyable aspects were mentioned, but by less than ten per cent of pupils. These included: doing activities (unspecified); the refreshments; all of it; and the quiz or test.

It is pleasing to note that, in their responses to this question at the end of the course, 11 per cent pupils praised Centre staff, citing them as one of the best things about the Centre.

4.2 What did parents think about *Playing for Success*?

A total of 550 parents responded to the parents' questionnaire at the beginning of the course (a pre-course response rate of 48 per cent). Of these, 351 parents also completed a questionnaire after their child had attended one of the 12 Centres (some Centres had difficulty in obtaining completed questionnaires from parents once their child was no longer attending the Centre). The following analyses are based on responses from the 351 parents who completed both questionnaires (31 per cent of all parents). This enables us to make direct comparisons between parents' expectations of *Playing for Success* and the comments of the same group of parents after their child had completed the course.

4.2.1 Were parents pleased that their children were selected for *Playing for Success*?

The pre-course questionnaire asked parents how pleased they were that their child had been selected to go to the Study Support Centre. Parents were invited to respond using a five-point scale (*very pleased, pleased, not very pleased, not pleased at all, not sure*). The responses to this question at the pre-course stage were very positive, with 87 per cent of parents saying that they were ‘very pleased’ and a further 13 per cent saying that they were ‘pleased’ that their child had been selected. Similarly, the parents’ responses at the post-course stage showed a high degree of satisfaction with the initiative. Eighty-six per cent said that they were ‘very pleased’ that their child had attended the Centre, and a further 14 per cent said that they were ‘pleased’. On both occasions, no parent expressed a negative response and only one or two responded ‘don’t know’.

4.2.2 What did parents want the Centres to do for their children?

We were interested to find out which of the Centres’ objectives were most important to parents. The pre-course questionnaire included the following question: ‘Study Support Centres try to help children in a number of ways. Please tick the ways that are most important to you.’ The question listed ten different items from which parents were invited to choose five. The post-course questionnaire listed the same items, asking parents to indicate whether they felt the Centre had helped their child with each one (helped, not sure, did not help). The results (listed in order of the number of parents’ responses in the post-course questionnaire) are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 What are the five most important ways in which the Centre can help your child/In which ways has the Centre helped your child?

	Pre-course % rating as important	Post course % saying it helped
Learn to use a computer to do school work	62	86
Become more self-confident	79	78
Get better at mathematics	77	71
Get better at expressing themselves in writing	78	66
Get better at reading	53	65
Meet children from other schools	30	61
Go to school more regularly	3	53
Have a better chance of getting a job when they leave school	45	51
Become more willing to do homework	41	51
Like school more	16	50

Based on responses from 351 parents who completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires.

Percentages may sum to more than 100 because pupils could make more than one response.

Statements are listed in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned in the post-course questionnaire.

The table shows that at the beginning of the course, help with self-confidence, mathematics and writing were high on the list of importance in terms of parents' expectations of *Playing for Success*. These three items were each selected as important by more than three-quarters of all parents. Learning to use a computer was selected by 62 per cent of all parents and help with reading by just over half. 'Employability' and improved willingness to do homework were each selected by about 40 per cent of parents. Meeting children from other schools was selected by 30 per cent. Enjoyment of

school and going to school more regularly were outcomes that came lower down the list of priorities.

Generally, there was a very high level of satisfaction with the Centre's impact in relation to parents' expectations. The statement gaining the highest level of satisfaction (86 per cent) was that the Centre had helped their child to use a computer for schoolwork. Interestingly, before the course this outcome had been selected as important by considerably fewer (62 per cent) of parents.

At the end of the course, more than 70 per cent of parents felt that the Centre had helped with their child's self-confidence and/or with mathematics. More than 60 per cent thought that the Centre had helped with their child's reading and/or writing skills, and about 50 per cent thought the Centre had helped their child with 'employability' and by improving her/his willingness to do homework.

Just over 60 per cent of parents thought that attending the Centre helped their child to meet children from other schools.

Parents appeared to believe that taking part in *Playing for Success* had improved their children's attitudes towards school. Some of the most striking findings were those relating to attendance and enjoyment of school. At the beginning of the course only three per cent of parents thought that one of the five 'best things' that the Centre could do for their child was to help them go to school more regularly whereas, after the course, 53 per cent thought the course had a positive effect on their child's attendance. There was a similar response pattern for the item concerned with enjoyment of school with 50 per cent of parents believing that the Centre had had a positive impact on their child's enjoyment of school compared with 16 per cent who had rated this factor amongst their five most important outcomes prior to the course.

On the other hand, at the end of the course, fewer parents felt that the Centres had helped their child with mathematics and writing skills than had hoped that the Centre would do

so. This could possibly be explained by the fact that, at the outset of the course, parents anticipated that their children would benefit most in areas of the more ‘traditional’ academic skills (i.e. mathematics and writing.). A similar pattern was observed last year.

In addition to the closed questions, the pre-course questionnaire included an open-ended question asking parents to tell us what they felt was the best thing that the Study Support Centre could do for their child. (The post-course questionnaire had a similar question, asking parents to identify the best thing about their child going to the Centre.) Parents’ responses are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 What is the best thing the Study Centre could do/did for your child?

	Pre-course %	Post-course %
Improve computer/internet skills	12	32
More confident	40	26
Enjoy him/herself	11	20
Improve literacy skills	15	11
Improve numeracy skills	13	9
Get help/support with their studies	10	9
More motivated to learn	12	8
Improve schoolwork in general	12	5
No response	15	13

Based on responses from 351 parents who completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires. Percentages may sum to more than 100 because parents could make more than one response.

Statements are listed in order of frequency with which they were mentioned in the post-course questionnaire.

A number of other benefits were each mentioned by less than ten per cent of parents.

More than 80 per cent of parents answered these pre- and post-course open-ended questions. Parents gave a wide variety of answers and commonly mentioned more than one ‘best thing’. The patterns of responses were broadly consistent with parents’ answers to the closed questions.

In the post-course questionnaire, the most frequently mentioned benefit was improving computer skills. This benefit was often mentioned in conjunction with others.

As one parent wrote: *‘Learning to use a computer, and learning to read. Emma¹ reads a lot more at home now.’* Another parent commented: *‘I feel my child has learnt more about computers and found out more knowledge about how to use them properly, also to take care of other people’s property.’*

The second most frequently mentioned benefit was increased self-confidence. One parent, for example, wrote that her son had become: *‘More confident with new people and different working surroundings, hopefully setting him up well for high school.’* Another said: *‘The [Centre] has brought my son out of his shell, he has a lot more confidence in his self, and his work has improved a lot. My son has enjoyed going to the Study Centre. It’s a shame that it’s come to the end of it.’*

The third most frequently mentioned benefit was enjoyment. One parent wrote: *‘She enjoyed all of it, because she was learning in a fun way.’* Another said her child: *‘Thought [the Centre] was great. Talked about it all the time.’*

Other benefits mentioned by at least ten per cent of parents either before or after the course included the following:

- Improving literacy and numeracy skills or schoolwork in general (*‘It has definitely helped to improve his English and maths. He is getting better marks and they are consistent every week’*)
- Becoming more motivated to learn (*‘The help and positive attention that the staff gave Tom encouraged him to try harder and enjoy more.’*)
- Getting help/support for their studies (*‘Good support from staff in a friendly, happy learning environment.’*).

¹ Names have been substituted by pseudonyms

Other benefits mentioned, but by less than ten per cent of parents, included: learning new things; provision of a good working environment; improvement of social skills; opportunities to do activities (unspecified); and working with other people.

4.3 Teachers' views of *Playing for Success*

This section reports the expectations and experiences of teachers. As mentioned above, we received completed questionnaires from 91 schools, the majority of which (51) were from primary schools. Just over 60 per cent of the responding schools had sent children to a *Playing for Success* Centre before.

4.3.1 How did teachers expect pupils to benefit?

The questionnaire asked teachers how they anticipated pupils would benefit from attending the Study Support Centre. Almost all teachers (98 per cent) responded to this open-ended question, and their responses are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 How teachers thought pupils would benefit

	%
Boost confidence/self-esteem	54
Improve literacy skills	33
Become more motivated and eager to learn	31
Develop computer/internet skills	28
Improve numeracy skills	25
Skills enrichment/gaining new skills (general)	14
Improved SATs levels	11
Small group tuition	11
No response	2

Based on responses from 91 teachers who completed the school questionnaire.

Percentages may sum to more than 100 because teachers could make more than one response.

Statements are listed in order of frequency with which they were mentioned.

A number of other benefits were each mentioned by less than ten per cent of teachers.

Teachers had a number of expectations of *Playing for Success*, which fell into two main areas of self-confidence/motivation to learn and academic skills. As found in previous years' evaluations, the majority of teachers (54 per cent) said that they had anticipated that attending the Centre would increase pupils' self-confidence/self-esteem. A further 31 per cent said that they hoped that the Centre would improve pupils' motivation.

One teacher listed the school's expectations as follows: *'Learning in a different environment. Social interaction with peers from their own and other schools. Confidence building through coping with unknown people in an unfamiliar setting as well as through Centre activities. Relationship building with adults. Stimulation towards achievement.'* Another wrote that: *'The children would have their self esteem raised through attending sessions at a high prestige venue, using a computer suite.'*

In terms of academic skills, 28 per cent of teachers said that they hoped the Centre would help children with their computer skills. As was the case last year, this answer was more likely to be given by teachers from primary schools than by those from secondary schools. A third of teachers commented that they expected the Centre to help pupils with literacy and a quarter hoped for improvements in numeracy. Fourteen per cent of teachers anticipated that their pupils would benefit from skills enrichment or gaining new skills. Eleven per cent of all teachers expressed the hope that the Centre would help to improve the National Curriculum Assessment results attained by pupils. For example, one teacher commented that the children would gain: *'Increased skills in English, maths, ICT. An ability to organise themselves and their work. Increased responsibility for their own learning.'*

Eleven per cent of teachers believed that their pupils would benefit from the small group tuition provided by the Centre. The latter benefit was more likely to be mentioned by teachers in primary schools.

Other potential benefits, mentioned by fewer than ten per cent of teachers, included: being in a stimulating and/or motivating environment; new or improved social relationships with pupils from other schools; improved communication and/or social skills; and support to develop independent study skills.

4.3.2 What impact did teachers think the Centres had on pupils?

The questionnaire for schools contained a 'closed' question, asking teachers to rate the impact of the Centre on different aspects of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and skills. The aspects listed in the question were related to the stated purposes of *Playing for Success*. Teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, using a three-point scale (*agree, neutral, disagree*). The results are shown in Table 4.7 (not all teachers answered every item).

Table 4.7 Teachers' ratings of the impact of the Centre on pupils who attended during the Easter term

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	No response
	%	%	%	%

Pupils' self-esteem and confidence improved	93	8	0	0
ICT skills improved	93	7	0	0
The Centre had a positive impact on pupils' motivation at school	84	15	1	0
Literacy skills improved	68	29	1	2
Study skills improved	64	33	0	3
Numeracy skills improved	63	35	1	1
The Centre had a positive impact on homework completion	18	69	3	10
Pupils' school attendance improved	9	75	7	10

Based on responses from 91 teachers who completed the school questionnaire. Percentages may not sum to exactly 100 per cent due to rounding.

The table shows that the majority of teachers felt that the Centres had helped to develop pupils' attitudes and skills across a range of areas. More than 80 per cent of all teachers felt that the Centres had a positive impact on pupils' motivation at school, pupils' self-esteem and confidence and their ICT skills. Over 60 per cent thought pupils' literacy, numeracy and study skills had improved.

Two statements obtained the agreement of fewer than 20 per cent of the responding teachers. Only 18 per cent agreed that the Centre had a positive impact on homework completion, and only nine per cent thought that pupils' school attendance had improved. The response to the latter question may simply reflect the selection criteria for the Centre. Only three per cent of all teachers reported that the school had selected pupils with a poor record of attendance, while nearly a quarter said that a good record attendance was one of the criteria that they had used in selecting pupils to attend. In most cases, therefore, pupils probably had an acceptable or good record of attendance at school before attending the Centre. However, the teachers' responses contrast with those of the parents, half of whom believed that attending the Centre had encouraged their children to go to school more regularly. It is possible, however, that the parents were referring specifically to attendance during the period of the course.

Comparing the responses of primary and secondary school teachers, we found only one significant difference of opinion about the overall impact of *Playing for Success*. Primary school teachers were significantly more likely to agree with the statement that the Centre had improved pupils' ICT skills ($p < 0.05$). It is possible that this is because the Centres, had a greater potential to raise the ICT skills of primary pupils. It also may reflect the fact that primary teachers responding to the questionnaire were in a better position to judge this aspect of pupils' skills because they taught the pupils ICT themselves.

4.3.3 How did teachers rate the Centres' organisation?

The school questionnaire included a section concerning four organisational aspects of the scheme, namely: information about the Centre; liaison over practical arrangements; transport; and feedback on pupils' progress at the Centre. Teachers were invited to rate the Centre's performance in relation to each item (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 Teachers' ratings of aspects of the Centre's organisation

	Good %	Neither good nor poor %	Poor %	No response %
Liaison over practical arrangements (e.g. dates, times)	92	7	1	0
Information about the Study Support Centre	91	8	0	1
Transport arrangements	90	6	1	3
Feedback on pupils' progress at the Centre	73	24	2	1

*Based on responses from 91 teachers who completed the school questionnaire.
Percentages may not sum to exactly 100 per cent due to rounding.*

The table shows that the majority of the 91 teachers considered the Centres to be well organised, especially in relation to practical arrangements and information about the Study Support Centre. Teachers' responses regarding feedback on pupils' progress was slightly less positive. Although the majority of teachers (73 per cent) thought the feedback on pupils' progress to be 'good', almost a quarter gave this a neutral rating, and two per cent (i.e. two teachers) rated it as 'poor'.

We asked teachers if they, or any other member of staff from their school, had visited the Study Support Centre during the period of the course. We found that the majority (67 per cent) of schools had a member of staff who had visited the Centre. This was especially true of the 40 secondary schools, 31 of which ensured that teachers visited during the course.

4.3.4 Would teachers send pupils to the Centre in future?

We wanted to know whether the schools would be keen to send another group of pupils to the Centre, so we asked teachers to respond to the following question: ‘If you have the opportunity, will you send pupils to a *Playing for Success* Study Support Centre in the future? Teachers were asked to respond by ticking one of three boxes (*yes, not sure, no*) and then to explain the reasons for their answer. There was a 100 per cent positive response to this question: all 91 teachers indicated that they would send pupils to the Centre in the future. All but one teacher gave reasons for their responses. Most gave more than one reason. The main reasons given by teachers are shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Teachers’ reasons for sending pupils to the Centre in the future

	%
A positive worthwhile experience for all the pupils	51
General educational benefits to pupils/schools	26
Pupils felt ‘special’ in a positive way/raised self-esteem	21
Provided broader learning experiences/opportunities (than school)	17
Pupils wanted to attend – we were oversubscribed	15
Increases motivation	11
Centre was well run	10
No response	1

Based on responses from 91 teachers who completed the school questionnaire. Percentages may sum to more than 100 because teachers could make more than one response.

A number of other reasons were each mentioned by less than ten per cent of teachers.

The comments from teachers were overwhelmingly positive and only one made a negative comment (about transport).

Just over half of the teachers' said that they wanted to send pupils to *Playing for Success* in the future because it had been a positive worthwhile experience for those who had attended this year.

As one teacher commented: *'The children were so happy and positive about the whole thing. The attendance was wonderful, and the broad smiles on their faces the whole time they were in the Centre spoke volumes.'* Another said: *'Every pupil who has attended has been overwhelmingly positive about their experiences at the Study Support Centre and we have felt the benefits in school.'*

About a quarter of teachers noted the educational benefits that had accrued to the pupils or the school. One teacher said: *'There is a definite improvement in ICT which teachers say is evident. It's not yet possible to measure improvement in literacy and numeracy but we are working on this.'* Another teacher explained: *'Pupils all had very positive experiences – actual learning gains are difficult to quantify – all felt they had gained IT skills, many felt more confident in class and thought it had helped with literacy and numeracy.'*

Increased self-confidence and motivation amongst children who had attended the Centre was seen as another important reason for participating in *Playing for Success*. About a fifth of the teachers felt that pupils who had attended felt 'special' in a positive way and/or that their self-esteem had been raised. Eleven per cent commented on the increased motivation they had noticed amongst pupils who had attended the Centre. One teacher said: *'All the pupils who have attended have enjoyed the experience and teachers have noticed improved confidence, esteem and motivation.'* Another said: *'The fact that self-esteem and confidence was increased is to me a major reason to do this again.'*

A reason given by 17 per cent of teachers was the fact that the Centre provided broader learning experiences or opportunities that they were unable to provide at school. As one teacher commented, *Playing for Success* had provided the school with: *'An opportunity*

to place our pupils in a safe learning environment where an opportunity to learn in modes other than the more traditional school based ones is valued.'

Some 15 per cent indicated that their pupils had wanted to attend or that more pupils had wanted to attend than were able to do so. One teacher said: *'Any opportunity out of school to develop learning skills is a bonus and the fact that it was off-site learning seemed to be more attractive to students.'*

One in ten of the teachers took the opportunity to praise the way the Centre was organised. Other reasons for sending pupils again, mentioned by fewer than ten per cent of teachers, included: pupils had established good relationships with other pupils; the Centre was different from anything else on offer out-of-school – it was a 'fun' way to learn; the Centre provided small group or individual support, as appropriate; and the emphasis on ICT as a learning tool.

4.4 What improvements to the Study Support Centres did pupils, parents and schools suggest?

This section presents the suggestions offered by pupils, parents and schools about how the Centres could be improved.

We asked pupils 'What would make the Study Support Centre better?' The post-course parent questionnaire had a question asking parents about anything that they felt could be improved. Similarly, the school questionnaire invited further comments and suggestions for improvement from teachers.

The responses to these open-ended questions are shown in the following two tables. Table 4.10 shows the improvements most commonly suggested by parents and pupils and Table 4.11 shows the comments and improvements suggested by teachers.

Table 4.10 Improvements suggested by pupils and parents

	Pupils %	Parents %
Nothing – it’s good already	23	18
Longer courses/more places/holiday courses	10	9
More sports-related activities	10	<1
Improvement to activities	9	3
Improvement to facilities	6	2
Keep parents informed	0	3
No response	20	58

Based on responses from 319 pupils and 351 parents who completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires. Respondents could make more than one comment. Statements are listed in order of the proportion of pupils mentioning a factor. A number of other reasons were each mentioned by fewer than three per cent of pupils or parents.

A fifth of pupils, and over half of parents, made no response to this question. Presumably this was because, in the majority of cases, they had no suggestion for improvement to make. Many comments highlighted the positive nature of pupils’ experiences at the Centre. The most popular answer from both pupils and parents was ‘nothing because the Centre is good already’.

As one parent wrote: *‘I think from Craig’s point of view the Study Support Centre didn’t need to be improved, and I would just like to say thank you to a great team of people who really put the interest of the individual child first.’*

Typical comments from pupils included: *'It's already the total best. I'd love to come back.'* and *'I don't think the Study Centre needs to improve. I like it the way it is and I want it to stay like that'* and *'There's nothing that could be better. It's just perfect!'*

The main suggested 'improvement' from pupils was that they would have liked to attend for a longer period. Comments here included: *'[It would be better if] we could come whenever we wanted to come down, like on a week-end, to have a search on the net.'*

Ten per cent of pupils said they would have liked more sports-related activities, such as the opportunity to practise sports, meet the players or go on the pitch. Pupils also suggested improvements to: activities (nine per cent); facilities (six per cent); and food and drink (five per cent).

Parents' suggestions tended to echo those of their children. Their main suggested 'improvement' was that access to *Playing for Success* should be expanded – that places should be increased and made available for longer periods of time. In addition, a few parents (three per cent) said that they would like to be kept better informed about their child's progress.

Table 4.11 Teachers' further comments and suggested improvements

	%
Pupils gain a great deal from the scheme	17
The staff at the Centre do a good job	11
Our school would like to send more pupils	11
More liaison with the school is needed	11
The school is satisfied with the present organisation	10
The Centre is well organised	8
The school is looking forward to further participation	7
No response	34

Based on responses from 91 teachers who completed the school questionnaire. Teachers could make more than one response.

Table 4.11 shows the suggestions for improvements made by teachers. Like pupils and parents, many teachers took the opportunity to enthuse about the scheme in general.

For example, one teacher wrote: *'An excellent idea. Absolutely perfect for our children who come from challenging circumstances. Adult support was good – teacher was excellent with good, well-paced lessons and good behaviour management.'* Another said: *'Thanks for all your help – I can't say how pleased Darren was to win his prize. He was feeling very low at the time and it really motivated him. Thanks!'*

Eleven per cent of teachers commented that the staff at the Centre were doing a good job. One teacher wrote: *'The staff, and in particular [name of staff member], work tremendously hard to provide an excellent service for the benefit of pupils and families. Excellent!'*. Another teacher who had visited the Centre and observed the staff and

pupils at work said: *'My feelings were that here was a group of children genuinely valued by the adults working with them, treated with great respect, treated positively.'*

A similar proportion of teachers indicated that they would like their school to participate again: *'Can we send more children please! This has forged excellent relations between the football club, Study Centre and the schools involved.'*

Eleven per cent of teachers would have liked better communication with the Centres: for example, more liaison and feedback. Teachers' comments on this issue tended to be constructive and many took pains to include positive comments as well.

As one teacher wrote, s/he would have liked: *'More feedback to schools on test attainment in testing carried out. Schools need to know if the scheme is working. Schools should be given [a] copy of results before and after the ten-week course. Apart from that everything was excellent. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed it. So did I.'*

Another said: *'I would love to be involved again. An initial planning session would be useful to establish children's needs and levels they were working at and to see the whole programme so parents could take a greater part/have increased understanding.'*

A third teacher commented: *'Follow up contact! Group email to students restating expectations, how they are doing. Follow up work (that) schools can do (to) help to strengthen what is being covered on the programme.'*

However, many of the teachers simply expressed satisfaction with the *Playing for Success*, saying that they were happy with the present organisation (ten per cent), that the school was looking forward to further participation (eight per cent) and that the Centre was well organised (seven per cent).

These feelings of satisfaction were summed up by one teacher who wrote: *'To date I have no suggestions as the experience was a complete success.'*

In the school questionnaire, we asked whether or not teachers had planned any follow-up work with pupils, related to their experiences at *Playing for Success*. Only about a quarter of schools said that they had done so. Reasons for this are unclear, but a lack of communication concerning the curriculum areas covered may have been a contributing factor. Examples of follow-up work included: pupils talking about their experiences to other pupils in PSHE, tutorials or assemblies; displays produced in school; pieces in school newsletter; pupils acting as team leaders/mentors to disseminate ICT skills; and pupils developing further the ICT skills that they had experienced at the Centre.

4.5 How did the sports club environment contribute to pupils' experiences?

We were interested to find out how the sports club environment had contributed to the quality of pupils' experiences, so we included a question on this in the school questionnaire. Teachers' response to this question are shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 In what way did the fact that the study support facilities were linked with a sports club contribute to the quality of pupils' experiences?

	%
Pupils felt privileged/special going to a sports club	28
The location raised the profile and status of the initiative	22
Pupils' motivation was improved	22
The possibility of seeing players was an incentive	19
Pupils were excited by the fact that it was sports-related	17
Receiving club merchandise/tickets was an incentive to attend	14
No response	3

Based on responses from 91 teachers who completed the school questionnaire.

Teachers could make more than one response.

A number of other reasons were each mentioned by less than ten per cent of teachers.

Most teachers were able to identify one or more ways in which the sports club environment had contributed to the quality of pupils' experiences. Twenty-eight per cent of the teachers commented on the fact that pupils felt privileged or 'special' going to the club and a further 22 per cent suggested that the location of the Centre in the sports club raised the profile and status of the initiative.

As one teacher said, the sporting venue had a ‘Major impact. Pupils felt important travelling in a Club minibus and had the kudos amongst their peers of having been specially selected to work at the club. The prospect of meeting players and working in the media centre was also a big thrill.’

Another teacher commented: ‘Initially children, especially the boys in the group, thought it would be ‘cool’ to take part because of the venue. (In comparison, a group of children given the chance to study at the local secondary school had much poorer attendance.)’

The motivation engendered by the link with sporting venues was clearly seen as a strong element in the success of the scheme, and was mentioned by 22 per cent of respondents.

As one teacher explained: ‘Football is an important motivator for our children. They were proud to be chosen and felt part of the club.’ Another teacher commented that: ‘There is tremendous support for [the football club] across all ages. Therefore, any experience with the club is viewed in a positive manner.’ Another said: ‘It was ‘COOL’! The boys were chosen for reasons connected to lack of motivation’.

The chance of seeing players was deemed to be an incentive by 19 per cent of teachers, and 14 per cent believed that receiving club merchandise and/or tickets for matches was an additional incentive to attend.

As one teacher said: ‘High profile venue has added value. It helps pupils feel important and this is reinforced when professional players visit sessions and talk with them. Positive words from players underline [that] learning is important’. Another commented: ‘Pupils enjoyed the opportunity of seeing behind the scenes at the stadium. The contact with players was very important to them. Tickets for matches were a coveted reward’.

Commenting on club merchandise and tickets, another teacher said: ‘Gives an added attraction – especially prizes (match tickets and escorting the team at matches). Certainly motivated pupils!’

Positive effects mentioned by fewer than ten per cent of respondents, some of which are referred to in the comments above, included: the different learning environment; the opportunity to see behind the scenes at the club was exciting for pupils; the ‘street cred’ or kudos gained by pupils who attended; and that the Club’s success on the field was a big influence.

There were no negative comments about the link with a sports club, although a few teachers expressed the view that the quality of the experience was more important than the venue. Also, a few teachers commented that the impact of the sporting venue had been especially strong at first but was of less importance once pupils settled into their course.

4.6 Summary: Expectations and experiences of *Playing for Success*

This chapter has examined the attitudes and experiences of pupils who attended *Playing for Success*, as well as those of their parents and teachers.

What did pupils think of *Playing for Success*?

- Three hundred and nineteen pupils completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires.
- Most pupils looked forward to attending the Centres. They anticipated that they would be ‘fun’ and ‘interesting’, and they expected that they would be given help there to develop their academic skills. Most pupils also thought that they would be helped to develop their confidence.
- The Centres lived up to pupils’ expectations in most areas and exceeded them with regard to help in using computers and becoming more self-confident. Pupils’ judgements of the impact of the Centres on their mathematics, reading and writing were similar to their expectations – about three quarters expected the Centres to help in these areas and a similar proportion judged them to have done so.

What did parents think of *Playing for Success*?

- Three hundred and fifty one parents completed both pre- and post-course questionnaires.
- The majority of parents said that they were very pleased that their children had been selected to attend *Playing for Success*. At the post-course stage, 87 per cent of parents indicated that they were ‘very pleased’ that their child attended the Centre, and a further 13 per cent indicated that they were ‘pleased’.
- Parents wanted Centres to help their children in a variety of ways, particularly in self-confidence, writing, mathematics and computer skills.
- Parents felt that the Centres had supported their children in a number of ways, especially in using computers and improving self-confidence. It was interesting to

note that about half of the parents believed that the Centres had encouraged their children to go to school more regularly and to like school more.

- Parents' comments revealed that they valued the opportunities that the Centres provided for their children to make academic and personal progress in an out-of-school environment.

What did teachers think of *Playing for Success*?

- Ninety-one teachers completed the school questionnaire.
- More than half of the teachers expected the initiative to benefit pupils' confidence. About 30 per cent also felt that pupils' motivation, literacy and computer skills would benefit.
- Over ninety per cent of teachers felt that the Centre had improved pupils' ICT skills, self-esteem and confidence. Over eighty per cent thought that the Centre had had a positive impact on pupils' motivation at school.
- All the teachers said that they would send pupils to *Playing for Success* in the future.
- Over 90 per cent of the teachers rated the Centre's liaison over practical arrangements as 'good'.
- Nearly three-quarters of teachers felt that they had received good feedback on pupils' progress at the Centre.
- Over two-thirds of schools had ensured that a teacher visited the Centre during the course. But only about a quarter had planned any follow-up work with pupils related to their experiences at the Centre.

What improvements did participants suggest?

- Pupils, parents and teachers were asked to identify any aspects of the Centres they felt could be improved. Their responses highlighted the positive nature of pupils' experiences – the most common response was that it did not need improvement because it was 'good already'.
- Pupils, parents and teachers wanted the scheme to be expanded, to offer more places and longer courses.

5 Achievement in numeracy and reading, and changes in attitudes

This chapter investigates pupils' numeracy and reading comprehension skills before and after attending *Playing for Success* Centres. It also looks at pupils' attitudes, using the questionnaire developed for earlier evaluations of *Playing for Success* (see Sharp *et al.*, 1999, 2001, 2002a).

5.1 The numeracy and reading tests

In autumn 1999, two parallel versions of a test for numeracy were developed for use in the evaluation of *Playing for Success*, and national age standardisations of these tests were conducted in Spring 2000. We also developed two versions of a test of reading comprehension. (For further details of these tests, see Sharp *et al.*, 2001.) The tests enabled us to compare the progress of pupils attending *Playing for Success* with that of pupils in a control group, and with a national sample of pupils of the same age.

As part of the evaluation of *Playing for Success* in 2002, one group of pupils completed one version of the numeracy test at the beginning of the course, and the other version at the end. Another group of pupils completed the two reading comprehension tests. All the tests were returned to the NFER for marking.

5.2 The attitude questionnaire

For earlier evaluations, we developed an attitude questionnaire for pupils to complete before and after attending *Playing for Success*, or at similar time-points for pupils in the control group. This questionnaire was used again in 2002. The questionnaire asked pupils to express the extent of their agreement with a number of statements relating to reading, writing, mathematics, study skills, and self-esteem. Twelve attitude scales were derived from these items.

The Reading Enjoyment scale included statements about pupils' attitudes to different types of reading such as fiction and non-fiction, and whether they read for pleasure, while Reading Confidence asked about whether pupils found reading easy.

Three scales related to writing. The items contributing to the Writing Confidence scale asked pupils about their spelling, and whether they found it easy to express their views in writing. Writing Enjoyment included items such as 'Writing stories is boring', while the Punctuation scale focused on the use of full stops, capital letters, etc.

Items such as 'I am good at maths' and 'I feel worried in maths lessons' contributed to the Mathematics Confidence scale, while the Mathematics Enjoyment scale asked pupils whether they found maths boring, and whether they enjoyed maths lessons.

Two scales related to study skills. The first, Working with Others, asked about whether pupils could work as part of team, could explain things to other pupils, and whether they

asked questions in class. Independent Study Skills included target setting, planning and re-drafting work, and following instructions.

The final group of scales related to aspects of self-esteem. The Popularity scale included items about whether pupils found it easy to make friends, whether they often felt left out, and whether they liked being the way they are. The Self-image scale asked pupils about how they felt others saw them, and the Self-confidence scale included items related to wanting to do better at school and worrying about meeting new people.

For further details of the composition of the attitude scales see Appendix 2.

5.3 Examining differences in attainment

Earlier evaluations of *Playing for Success* included a relatively large number of Centres. In 2002, the focus of the evaluation was on Centres which had not taken part in earlier evaluations, and included several new Centres. Other, more established, Centres could also choose to participate. Although we did not set up a new control group in 2001–2, we decided that the most appropriate approach to assessing the impact of *Playing for Success* this year was to compare the progress of pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 with the progress of similar pupils in the 2000–1 evaluation control group.

For each pupil completing the numeracy tasks, we used information from the previous year's control group to estimate the amount of progress which a pupil with similar characteristics would make if he or she did not attend *Playing for Success*. The characteristics taken into consideration when doing this were: gender; special needs; ethnicity (White or ethnic minority background); whether English was the pupil's first language; and key stage. We also took into account each pupil's scores at the beginning of the course. We then compared the estimated and actual progress. If, for a particular group of pupils, the mean actual progress was significantly greater than the mean estimated progress ($p < 0.05$), we could be reasonably certain that *Playing for Success* had had an impact on these pupils' progress. We used a similar approach for the reading comprehension test, and for the twelve attitude scales.

5.4 Progress in numeracy

In general, pupils' test scores increase as they get older. The use of age-standardised scores makes it possible to investigate whether their numeracy skills increased more rapidly during the period when they were attending *Playing for Success* than would be expected from the mere fact that they were a month or two older when they took the second test. It also enables us to compare the attainment and progress of pupils attending *Playing for Success* with national norms.

We received matched sets of pre- and post-course test results for 141 KS2 and 125 KS3 pupils from nine *Playing for Success* Centres. Each test was marked at NFER, and the raw marks were converted to age-standardised scores. For further details of this process, see Sharp *et al.* (2001). Table 5.1 summarises the test scores.

Table 5.1 Summary results for numeracy

		Pre-course	Post-course	Progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	141	91.2 (12.3)	98.4 (11.9)	7.2 (9.7)	p<0.001
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	125	83.5 (12.7)	94.0 (14.9)	10.4 (13.4)	p<0.001
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	266	87.6 (13.1)	96.3 (13.6)	8.7 (11.7)	p<0.001

Based on responses from 266 pupils in nine Centres

The table shows that the average pre-course numeracy scores of the pupils attending these *Playing for Success* Centres were significantly lower than the scores expected for pupils of their age. (The standardised scores of a nationally representative sample of pupils in Years 6 to 9 would have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation (sd) of 15.) The relatively low performance of pupils attending *Playing for Success* is particularly evident for pupils in KS3: less than 15 per cent of a nationally representative sample of pupils of this age would have achieved scores of 83 or below. In other words, on average, pupils in KS3 were performing in the bottom 15 per cent in numeracy when they began attending *Playing for Success*.

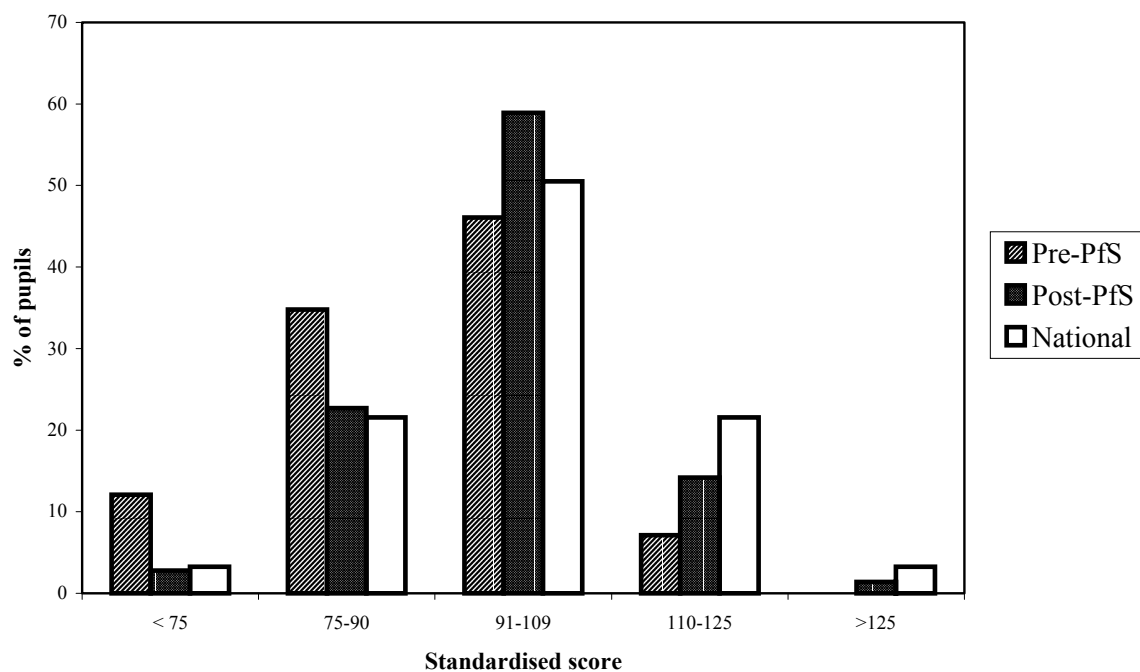
Overall, pupils in KS2 and attending *Playing for Success* made significant progress in numeracy (about seven standardised score points) during the period they were attending the Centres, although their post-course scores were still slightly less than the national average for their age. This suggests that *Playing for Success* appears to have helped KS2 pupils to progress from being ‘low attainers’ to achieving scores only slightly below average. Pupils in KS3 made greater progress (over ten standardised score points), but from a lower starting point, so their average post-course scores were still significantly below the expectation for their age.

These results may be compared with those obtained in the previous year’s evaluation. For pupils attending *Playing for Success* in the Spring term of 2001, we found that the average progress in numeracy achieved by KS2 pupils was about 8.3 points, i.e. slightly greater than for pupils attending in Spring 2002. Conversely, KS3 pupils attending in Spring 2001 made rather less progress than those attending in 2002, with average gains of 6.5 and 10.4 points respectively.

An alternative way of presenting the information in Table 5.1 is to show the distribution of pupils' scores in graphic form. Chart 5.1 shows the distribution of numeracy scores for KS2 pupils. The first two bars in each group represent the pre- and post-course scores achieved by pupils attending *Playing for Success*. The third bar in each group represents the national distribution of numeracy scores.

The distribution of age-standardised scores has been broken down into five groups. As noted before, a score of 100 points represents the attainment expected of pupils of a given age. The middle set of bars therefore represents pupils scoring around the average expected for pupils of their age (from 91 to 109 standardised score points). Reading from left to right, the sets of bars represent low attainment, below average attainment, around average attainment, above average attainment and high attainment on the test, adjusting for age. The height of each bar shows the percentage of pupils scoring at each level.

Chart 5.1 Distribution of KS2 numeracy scores



The chart confirms that the 141 KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 began their courses with relatively low achievement in numeracy. This is demonstrated by the bunching of scores towards the left hand side of the chart: 35 per cent of the group scored below average and a further 12 per cent attained low scores in numeracy at the pre-course stage. The distribution of post-course scores shows a shift towards the right hand side of the chart, indicating that pupils' numeracy scores had improved markedly by the end of the course. Fewer pupils were attaining below average scores (26 per cent were attaining 90 points or fewer, compared with 47 per cent at the pre-course stage). More of the pupils were attaining at or above the level expected for pupils of their age.

The Chart also shows that, unlike the pre-course scores, the post-course scores of the pupils attending *Playing for Success* were fairly similar to those achieved by a nationally representative sample of pupils. In other words, the pattern of scores had changed from one indicating considerable underachievement, to a more 'normal' distribution.

A similar pattern can be seen in Chart 5.2, which shows the numeracy scores achieved by pupils in KS3.

Chart 5.2 Distribution of KS3 numeracy scores

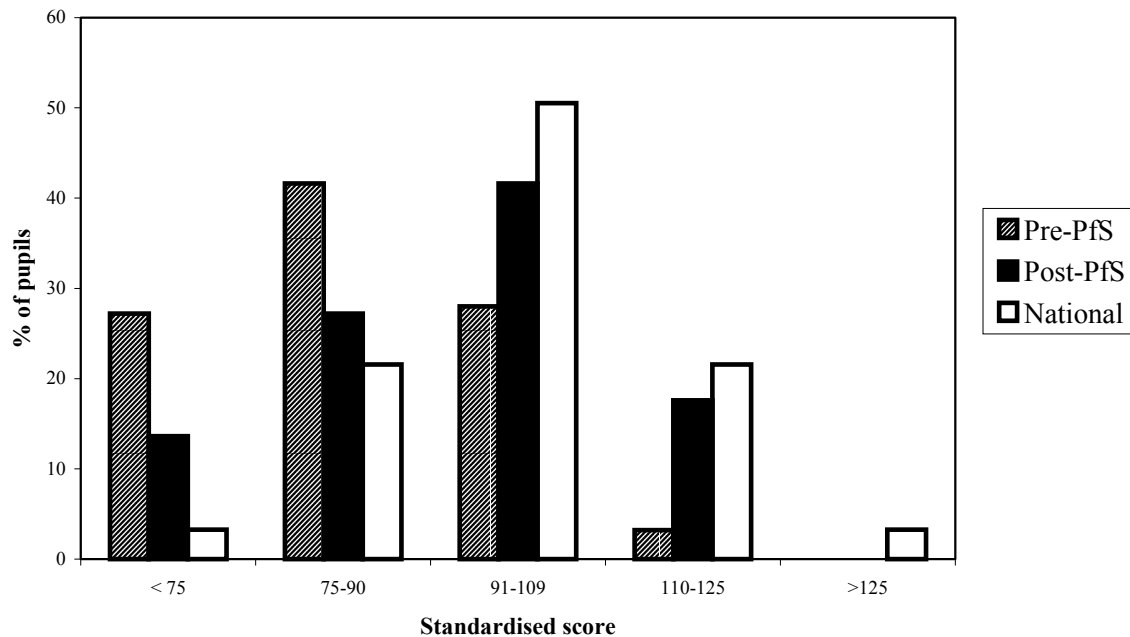


Chart 5.2 shows that the 125 KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 began their courses with even lower levels of achievement in numeracy than pupils in KS2. In this case, 42 per cent of KS3 pupils scored below average and a further 27 per cent had a low numeracy score (i.e. below 75 standardised score points).

There is evidence of a considerable shift in scores at the post-course stage. Fewer pupils scored in the below average or low categories (41 per cent scored fewer than 90 points, compared with 69 per cent at the pre-course stage). Many more pupils were scoring at around the average expected for their age (42 per cent, compared with 28 per cent at the pre-course stage). The percentage of pupils scoring at above average levels had also increased, by 14 per cent.

As for pupils in KS2, we can see that the post-course pattern of scores was closer to the national distribution by the end of pupils' time at the Centres.

5.4.1 Comparison with pupils not attending *Playing for Success*

In Spring 2001, we collected pre- and post-course numeracy scores for over 600 pupils in 24 Centres who were attending *Playing for Success*. We also collected numeracy scores from a control group of over 130 pupils from four Centres (40 in KS2 and 91 in KS3) not attending *Playing for Success* at the time. The tests and questionnaires were

administered at the same time to control group pupils and those in the corresponding *Playing for Success* Centres. The control group pupils were selected as being broadly comparable to those attending the Centres. We also collected background information on each of the pupils in the control group.

Analysis of the control group scores showed that, on average, the progress made by these pupils between the beginning and the end of the *Playing for Success* courses was about the same as would be expected from the effect of maturation alone, i.e. there was no significant change in their age-standardised numeracy scores. These pupils provide a benchmark against which we can compare the progress of pupils attending the Centres taking part in the evaluation in 2002.

It is, however, possible that the pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 differed from the 2001 control group in terms of certain characteristics, such as entitlement to free school meals. This is important because there is a statistical association between the progress achieved by pupils with different characteristics. We therefore undertook some additional analysis to take account of any such differences and to enable us to comment on the extent to which *Playing for Success* has benefited different groups.

Using the results from the 2001 control group, we estimated the likely progress of a pupil with a particular set of characteristics. For each pupil attending a *Playing for Success* Centre in 2002, we can compare the estimated progress with his or her actual progress. If, on average, the actual progress made by a group of pupils (e.g. pupils with special educational needs) is equal to the estimated progress of this group, we can be reasonably certain that the pupils taking part in the evaluation in 2002 are achieving at about the same level as similar pupils in the control group used for the 2001 evaluation. If actual progress is significantly greater than estimated progress, we may conclude that this group of pupils has benefited from their attendance at *Playing for Success*.

Table 5.2 Actual and expected progress in numeracy of pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 compared with 2001 control group

		Actual progress – expected progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	141	8.1 (9.7)	p<0.001
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	125	11.4 (13.4)	p<0.001
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	266	9.7 (11.7)	p<0.001

Based on responses from 266 pupils in nine Centres

Table 5.2 shows that the difference between the actual and predicted progress scores for KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 was 8.1, which is significantly different from zero. In other words, pupils in KS2 and attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 made considerably greater progress in numeracy than did pupils of the same age in the 2001 control group, when we take account of background factors such as gender and entitlement to free school meals. Therefore, we can be reasonably certain that attending one of these *Playing for Success* Centres has had a significant impact on numeracy scores for pupils in KS2.

Similarly, Table 5.2 shows that the comparable figure for KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 was 11.4, which is significantly greater than zero, demonstrating that attending *Playing for Success* has had a marked impact on numeracy scores at KS3 as well as at KS2.

Another way of looking at pupils' progress is by deriving an effect size (Cohen, 1969). The effect size refers to the magnitude of the effect and is a means of assessing the difference between two groups relative to underlying variation within the groups. A useful rule of thumb is that an effect size of 0.25 or more is likely to represent a finding which is of educational, as well as statistical significance (Gray *et al.*, 1990; Slavin and Fashola, 1998). The effect size for the progress made by KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success*, compared with the progress of the control group, was 0.66. Because the effect size is higher than 0.25, this indicates that *Playing for Success* had an educationally significant impact on KS2 pupils' numeracy results. The corresponding effect size for KS3 pupils was even greater, at 0.89.

Because we are using age standardised scores, the difference between pupils' pre- and post-course numeracy scores can be expressed in terms of months of age. For KS2 pupils, the progress of those attending *Playing for Success* was equivalent to about 17 months more than would be expected as a result of maturation alone. For KS3 pupils, the additional progress of *Playing for Success* pupils in numeracy was equivalent to about 24 months.

The evidence also suggests that pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds benefited from attending *Playing for Success*.

- When we looked at the scores of boys and girls attending *Playing for Success* separately, each group made greater progress in numeracy than did similar pupils in the control group, by 11.3 and 8.0 points respectively.
- Pupils with no identified special needs made greater progress in numeracy than similar pupils in the control group, by about 4.7 points. The progress of pupils with identified special needs who were attending *Playing for Success* was about the same

as that of similar pupils in the control group, showing no evidence of significant progress in numeracy for pupils with special needs.

- Pupils from both White and ethnic minority backgrounds attending *Playing for Success* made greater progress in numeracy than similar control group pupils (by 9.0 and 12.8 points respectively).
- The numeracy progress of pupils with English as their first language was 8.8 points greater than expected. The numeracy gains for pupils with English as an additional language was even greater, at 10.7 points.
- Pupils who were not entitled to free school meals made 10.3 points greater progress in numeracy than similar pupils in the control group. Those entitled to free school meals made even greater progress in numeracy (14.1 points) in comparison to similar pupils in the control group.

5.5 Progress in reading comprehension

We had pre-course and post-course reading comprehension test results for 306 pupils (158 in KS2 and 148 in KS3) in ten Centres. As for the numeracy tests, each test was marked at NFER, and the raw marks were converted to age-standardised scores. These are summarised in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Summary results for reading comprehension

		Pre-course	Post-course	Progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	158	86.7 (13.6)	89.7 (13.0)	3.1 (14.6)	p<0.01
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	148	86.2 (15.4)	92.2 (17.9)	6.0 (17.0)	p<0.001
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	306	86.4 (14.5)	90.9 (15.6)	4.5 (15.9)	p<0.001

Based on responses from 306 pupils in ten Centres

The table indicates that pupils attending *Playing for Success* had low levels of achievement in relation to national norms. The average pre-course reading comprehension scores were 14 points lower than the national average: only about 20 per cent of a nationally representative sample of pupils in Years 6 to 9 would achieve scores of 87 or below. Overall, pupils made highly significant amounts of progress between the beginning and end of the course, although progress was rather greater for KS3 pupils than for those in KS2 (by about 6 and 3 points respectively).

As before, it is possible to draw comparisons with the progress shown in the previous evaluation study. Pupils in KS2 attending Centres in 2001 achieved an average progress of about 6.3 points, which is greater than the 3.1 points achieved by KS2 pupils attending Centres in 2002. However, the average progress of KS3 pupils was about 4.1 points in 2001, rather lower than the 6.0 points achieved by KS3 pupils in 2002. This is similar to the pattern seen in the numeracy results.

The pattern of scores achieved by pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 can also be shown graphically, as in Chart 5.3

Chart 5.3 Distribution of KS2 reading comprehension scores

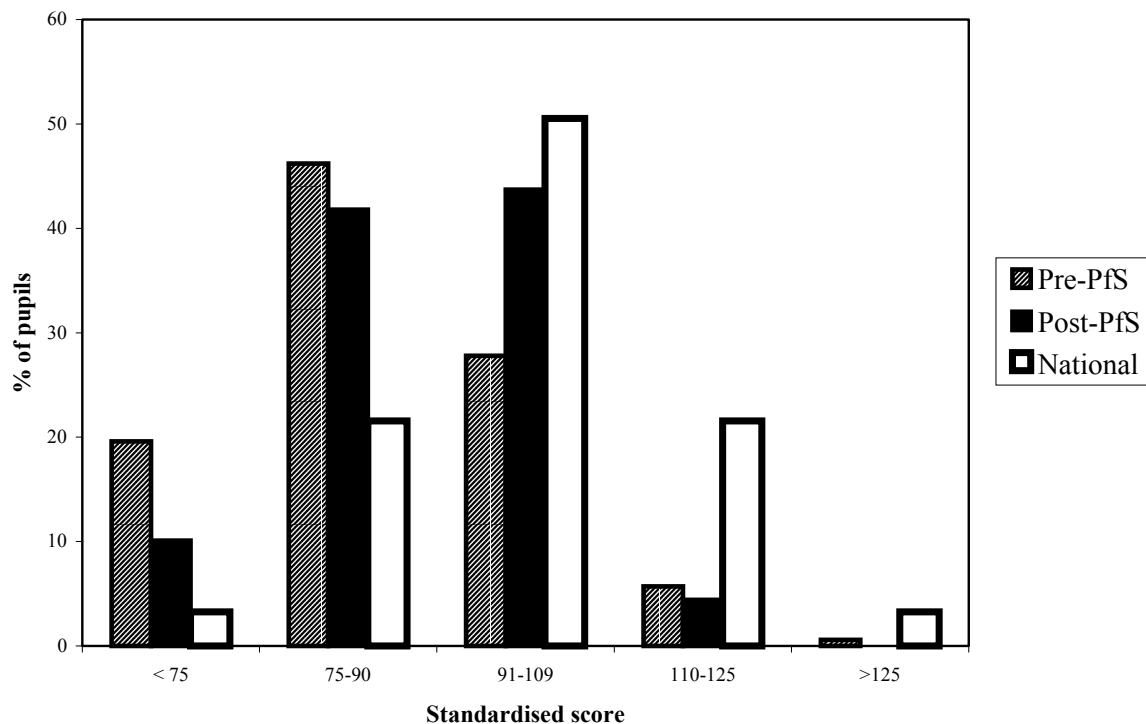
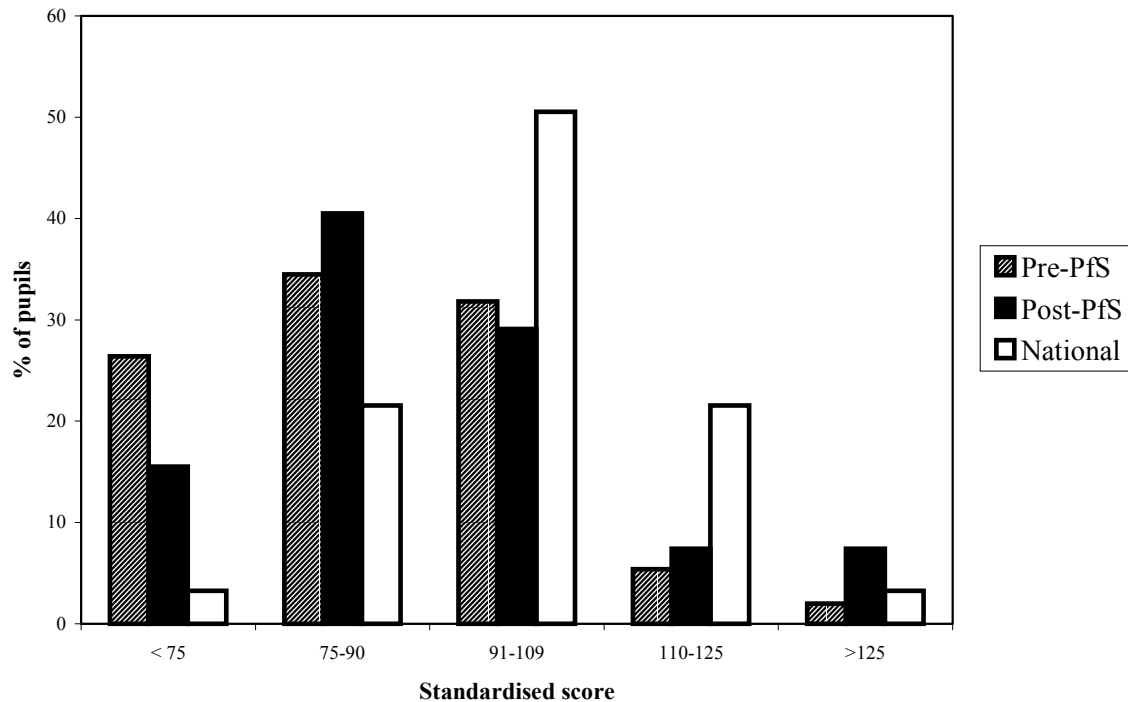


Chart 5.3 shows the reading comprehension scores of 158 KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success*. It indicates that many of these pupils were scoring at average or low levels (46 per cent scored from 75 to 90 standardised points and a further 20 per cent scored fewer than 75 points at the beginning of the course). Comparing the distribution of pre- and post-course scores, there is evidence of a reduction in the proportion of pupils scoring at very low levels. Fewer pupils scored 90 points or fewer (52 per cent, compared with 66 per cent at the pre-course stage). More pupils were scoring around the average expected for their age. On the other hand, there was also a small reduction in the percentage of pupils achieving above average or high scores in reading comprehension. The post-course scores of these KS2 pupils are still noticeably lower than those achieved by the national sample.

Chart 5.4 shows the distribution of reading comprehension scores for pupils in KS3.

Chart 5.4 Distribution of KS3 reading comprehension scores



The Chart shows the reading comprehension scores attained by 148 KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success*. Again, it indicates a picture of considerable underachievement at the beginning of the course, with 26 per cent of pupils scoring less than 75 standardised score points (low attainment) and a further 35 per cent scoring from 75 to 90 points (below average). Comparing the scores before and after *Playing for Success*, fewer pupils were scoring in the very low range (the percentage of pupils attaining less than 75 points fell by about 11 per cent). More pupils scored in the below average range, slightly fewer scored in the average range and slightly more attained above average or high scores (including seven per cent of pupils who were scoring in the highest range at the end of their time at *Playing for Success*).

5.5.1 Comparison with pupils not attending *Playing for Success*

In Spring 2001, we obtained 32 KS2 and 117 both pre- and post-course reading comprehension tests from a group of KS3 pupils. These pupils were not currently attending *Playing for Success*, but they were broadly comparable to those attending the Centres at the time. For the KS2 pupils, there was no significant increase in their age-standardised reading comprehension scores over this period. For the KS3 pupils, there was a small but statistically significant increase of 3.2 points. We can compare the

progress of pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 with the progress made by this control group.

As for numeracy, we used the results from the 2001 control group to estimate the likely progress of a pupil with a particular set of characteristics and then we compared the estimated progress with the actual progress achieved by each pupil attending *Playing for Success*.

Table 5.4 Actual and expected progress in reading comprehension for pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 compared with 2001 control group

		Actual progress – expected progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	158	1.0 (14.6)	ns
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	148	4.0 (17.0)	p<0.01
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	306	2.5 (15.9)	p<0.01

Based on responses from 306 pupils in ten Centres

As Table 5.4 shows, the difference between the actual and predicted progress scores for KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 was not significantly different from zero. In other words, when we take account of background factors, pupils in KS2 and attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 made about the same amount of progress in reading comprehension as did pupils of the same age in the 2001 control group. Therefore, we cannot say that attending the *Playing for Success* Centres included in the 2002 evaluation had a significant impact on the reading comprehension scores of KS2 pupils.

However, the picture is rather different for KS3 pupils, where there is evidence of a significant impact of *Playing for Success* on reading comprehension. Table 5.4 shows that KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* made greater progress, by four points, than pupils of a similar age and with similar characteristics in the control group. This additional progress has an effect size of 0.26, which can be taken as indicating that the impact is of educational, as well as statistical, significance.

For KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002, the difference between their pre- and post-course scores was equivalent to about 16 months of progress in reading comprehension.

As for numeracy, we also looked at the progress of particular groups of pupils.

- Boys attending *Playing for Success* made about the same amount of progress in reading comprehension as boys in the control group. Girls attending *Playing for Success* made greater progress in reading comprehension than did girls in the control group, by four points.
- Pupils with special needs attending *Playing for Success* made about the same amount of progress in reading comprehension as did similar pupils in the control group. However, pupils with no identified special needs made greater progress in reading

comprehension than did similar pupils in the control group. In this case, the difference was almost five points.

- Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds made greater progress (by 7.1 points) than similar pupils in the control group.
- Pupils entitled to free school meals and attending *Playing for Success* made about the same amount of progress as similar pupils in the control group. However, pupils not entitled to free school meals made about 3.5 points greater progress in reading comprehension than expected on the basis of control group pupils.

5.6 Measuring pupil attitudes

In total, 307 pupils from ten *Playing for Success* Centres completed both a pre-course and a post-course attitude questionnaire. We had matched results for 145 pupils in KS2 and 162 in KS3. (For further details of the statements comprising the attitude scales, see Appendix 2.) Pupils' attitudes were generally positive before attending *Playing for Success* and, for several of the twelve attitude scales, post-course scores suggested that pupils' attitudes had become more positive during the period. This was especially evident in the responses for pupils in KS2.

The scales where the scores of KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* showed evidence of significant positive change between pre- and post-course were:

- reading confidence
- writing confidence
- punctuation
- mathematics confidence
- working with others
- independent study skills
- popularity
- self-image.

For independent study skills and self-image, the scores of KS3 pupils also increased significantly between the beginning and end of the *Playing for Success* course. There were no significant changes over the period for either age-group in relation to reading enjoyment, writing enjoyment, mathematics enjoyment or self-confidence.

However, in order to decide if attending *Playing for Success* had had a greater than expected impact on pupils' attitudes, we compared pupils' progress with that expected on the basis of the control group's scores.

There were five scales for which there was no overall evidence of impact (i.e. where, for both KS2 and KS3 pupils, progress was not significantly different from that of the control group, when pupil characteristics such as gender were taken into account). These were reading confidence; writing enjoyment; punctuation; mathematics enjoyment; and working with others.

There were six scales where KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* showed evidence of significant improvement in comparison with the previous year's control group.

- Pupils' **reading enjoyment** scores increased significantly, in comparison with the control group, by about 0.6 points. However, the effect size for this gain was relatively modest (0.15) and is below the threshold of an educationally significant effect.
- Results for the **writing confidence** and **mathematics confidence** scales were very similar, with KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* making greater than expected progress, by about 0.5 points. The effect sizes were 0.20 and 0.15 respectively, suggesting that the educational significance of these gains was limited.
- KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* made greater progress than similar pupils in the control group in relation to their **independent study skills**, by about one point. This result is of educational as well as statistical significance, with an effect size of 0.39.
- For the **popularity** scale, pupils in KS2 made significantly greater progress than comparable pupils in the control group, by about 0.5 points. The effect size of 0.14 suggests that the educational impact of this change is limited.
- KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* made greater progress than those in the control group on the **self-image** scale (by about 0.6 points). The effect size (0.29) suggests that this is educationally, as well as statistically, significant.

There were fewer differences when we compared KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* with similar pupils in the control group. In this case, we found significant improvements for four scales.

- The **reading enjoyment** scores of KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* increased significantly, in comparison with the control group, by about 0.5 points. However, the relatively small effect size (0.12) suggests that the educational impact of this was limited.
- KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* also made greater progress than did similar pupils in the control group in terms of their scores on the **independent study skills** scale. This result is both educationally and statistically significant with an effect size of 0.27.

- The progress of KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* was greater than that of similar pupils in the control group by about 0.4 points for both the **self-image** and **self-confidence** scales. In each case, the effect size was about 0.15, suggesting only limited educational impact.

We looked at the progress of various groups of pupils compared with similar pupils in the control group. There was evidence suggesting that, compared with the 2001 control group, some groups of pupils attending *Playing for Success* were making more progress (in terms of their attitudes) than expected.

- Overall, the progress of boys and girls was similar, except that the **self-image** scores of girls increased more than those of boys, and the **self-confidence** scores of boys increased more than those of girls.
- Pupils with no identified special needs made greater progress than those with identified special needs on the **reading enjoyment**, **independent study**, **popularity**, **self-image** and **self-confidence** scales. On the other hand, pupils without special needs attending the Centres in 2002 made less progress than expected in **writing confidence**.
- White pupils, and those with English as their first language, made greater progress than would be expected on six of the scales: **reading enjoyment**; **writing confidence**; **mathematics confidence**; **independent study**; **popularity**; and **self-image**. White pupils attending *Playing for Success* also made greater than expected progress in **self-confidence**. The progress of pupils from ethnic minorities, and those with English as an additional language, was similar to that expected from examining the results for the control group.
- Pupils entitled to free school meals and attending *Playing for Success* made similar progress to pupils in the control group. However, the progress of pupils not entitled to free school meals was greater than expected compared with the control group for **popularity**, **self-image**, and **self-confidence**.

5.7 Summary: Achievement in numeracy and reading and changes in attitudes

This chapter has presented results about pupils' achievements and progress in numeracy and reading comprehension. It has also looked at the impact of attending *Playing for*

Success on pupils' attitudes, using an attitude questionnaire. The tests of numeracy and reading comprehension and the attitude questionnaire were specially designed for the evaluation of *Playing for Success*. The main findings are summarised below.

Numeracy

- We had pre- and post-course numeracy test results for 141 KS2 and 125 KS3 pupils. These pupils' numeracy skills increased significantly during the time they were attending *Playing for Success*.
- The mean age-standardised scores of the KS2 pupils increased by seven points, equivalent to about 17 months of progress. The scores of pupils in KS3 increased by about ten points, corresponding to about 24 months of progress.
- Pupils started *Playing for Success* with numeracy scores substantially lower than the national norm. Their post-course scores were slightly below the national norms.
- Pupils attending *Playing for Success* in 2002 made significantly greater progress than similar pupils in a control group of pupils tested in 2001.
- We looked at specific groups of pupils (boys and girls, White and ethnic minority pupils, pupils with English as their first or additional language, pupils entitled or not entitled to free school meals). All these groups of pupils made greater progress than comparable pupils in the control group.
- Pupils with no identified special needs attending *Playing for Success* made greater progress in numeracy than similar pupils in the control group. However, pupils with identified special needs attending *Playing for Success* made about the same amount of progress in numeracy as similar pupils in the control group (i.e. there was no evidence of an impact of the Centres on these pupils' numeracy scores).

Reading comprehension

- We were able to include the pre- and post-course reading comprehension test results of 158 pupils in KS2, and 148 in KS3.
- Pupils' pre-course age standardised scores indicated low levels of achievement, in relation to national norms. The post-course scores of these pupils were significantly higher than their pre-course scores. However, their post-course scores were still substantially lower than national norms in reading comprehension.

- We compared the progress of these pupils with a control group of similar pupils, who completed the reading comprehension tests in 2001. We found that KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* made about the same amount of progress as pupils of a similar age in the control group.
- The reading comprehension progress of *Playing for Success* pupils in KS3 was greater than that of similar pupils in the control group, and the effect size confirmed that this result can be viewed as educationally, as well as statistically significant. The gains were equivalent to about eight months of progress for pupils in KS3.
- Some groups of pupils, particularly those with no identified special needs, pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and those not entitled to free school meals, made greater progress in reading comprehension (relative to similar pupils in the control group) while attending *Playing for Success*.

Pupil attitudes

- We had pre- and post-course attitude questionnaires for 307 pupils (145 in KS2 and 162 in KS3). In general, pupils had positive attitudes at the pre-course stage.
- For five of the 12 attitude scales, there was no evidence of any significant impact of attending *Playing for Success* when we compared pupils who attended *Playing for Success* in 2002 with those in the 2001 control group.
- The reading enjoyment and independent study skills scores of pupils in both KS2 and KS3 increased significantly, in comparison with the control group.
- The writing confidence and mathematics confidence of KS2 pupils increased significantly compared to the control group pupils.
- Comparing the progress of *Playing for Success* pupils with those in the control group for the three self-esteem scales, yielded a more complex picture. Pupils in both key stages made significantly greater progress in self-image when compared with similar pupils in the control group. KS2 pupils attending *Playing for Success* made significantly greater than expected progress on the popularity scale. KS3 pupils attending *Playing for Success* made greater progress than those in the control group on the self-confidence attitude scale.

- Relative to the control group, certain groups of pupils made greater progress on a number of attitude scales while attending *Playing for Success*. This was particularly the case for pupils with no identified special needs, pupils from White ethnic backgrounds, those with English as a first language and those not entitled to free school meals.

6 Achievement in computer skills

This chapter considers the results relating to pupils' self-reported skills in using a computer. The computer skills checklist, developed specifically for use in the evaluation of *Playing for Success*, is briefly described, and results are presented for the checklist as a whole and for each of the four main skill areas.

6.1 The checklist of computer skills

The computer skills checklist was developed as part of the evaluation of *Playing for Success* in 1999–2000. The aim was to create an instrument suitable for use with underachieving pupils in Years 6 to 9. This checklist was subsequently used in 2000–1 and again in 2001–2.

The checklist covers a range of skills, from very basic operations such as switching on a computer or opening a file, to more complex tasks involving formatting text, using the internet, and sending and receiving emails. These skills relate to the National Curriculum expectations for pupils in key stages 2 and 3. The four sections of the checklist are computer basics; word processing; using the internet; and using email.

For each item in the checklist, pupils were asked to indicate one of three options ('can't do it yet', 'can do it with help', or 'can do it on my own'). These were scored from 0 ('can't do it yet') to 2 ('can do it on my own'), and the score for the relevant items were added to give the score for each of the sections. The four section totals were then added to give the overall ICT score. Full details are given in Sharp *et al.* (2001).

We present mean pre- and post-course scores for the overall computer checklist score and each of the four skill areas for pupils attending 12 *Playing for Success* Centres in Spring 2002, and comparisons with the results of a control group of pupils who completed the checklist in 2001.

6.2 Overall computer skills

We had pre-course and post-course computer checklists for 363 pupils from 11 Centres. The overall computer score which a pupil could obtain ranged from 0 to 72. Unlike the reading comprehension and numeracy tests, these scores are not age standardised. Table 6.1 shows the mean scores and their standard deviations (sd) in brackets.

Table 6.1 Summary results for total ICT score

		Pre-course	Post-course	Progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	171	39.4 (16.8)	59.5 (10.0)	20.1 (13.4)	p<0.001
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	192	52.7 (16.4)	64.0 (8.2)	11.2 (15.5)	p<0.001

All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	363	46.4 (17.9)	61.8 (9.3)	15.4 (15.2)	p<0.001
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Based on responses from 363 pupils in 11 Centres

Pupils in both KS2 and KS3 made substantial progress during the *Playing for Success* course. This was most marked for younger pupils, who started with substantially lower skill levels than did older pupils. Many pupils, particularly those in KS3, achieved scores very close to the maximum possible at the end of the course. Almost 20 per cent of KS2 pupils, and almost 30 per cent of KS3 pupils, had post-course scores of 70 or more, indicating their confidence in performing almost all the listed computer skills without help.

6.2.1 Comparison with pupils not attending *Playing for Success*

In Spring 2001, as well as collecting pre- and post-course ICT scores for almost 800 pupils from 27 Centres who were attending *Playing for Success*, we also collected similar information for a control group of 149 pupils from schools linked with four Centres but who were not attending *Playing for Success*. These pupils were selected as being broadly comparable to those attending the Centres at the time. Of these pupils, 31 were in KS2 and 118 in KS3.

Analysis of the scores achieved by pupils in the control group showed that, on average, these pupils made a small but significant amount of progress between the beginning and the end of the period covered by the *Playing for Success* courses. At the end of the period, the scores of pupils in KS2 has increased by about 4.5 points, and those of pupils in KS3 by about 1.6 points. We can compare the results of pupils attending *Playing for Success* in 2002 with the results achieved by this control group.

As we did for the reading comprehension and numeracy tests, and for the attitude scales (see Chapter 5), we estimated the likely progress of each pupil, taking into account the characteristics of that pupil, and compared this estimated progress with his or her actual progress. The difference between the actual progress and the estimated progress is a measure of the impact of *Playing for Success*.

Table 6.2 Actual and expected progress in total ICT score of pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 compared with 2001 control group

		Actual progress – expected progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	171	17.8 (13.3)	p<0.001
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	192	9.0 (15.5)	p<0.001
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	363	13.2 (15.2)	p<0.001

Based on responses from 363 pupils in 11 Centres

Table 6.2 shows that pupils in both key stages made very significant progress relative to pupils of the same age in the 2001 control group, when we take account of background factors such as gender and eligibility for free school meals. This additional progress amounted to 17.8 points for pupils in KS2, representing a very substantial improvement in pupils' ICT skills, over and above the progress which would be expected of pupils who did not attend *Playing for Success*. The progress of KS3 pupils was considerably less (9.0 points) but still highly significant. As shown in Table 6.1, older pupils started the course with much higher overall ICT scores. It is, therefore, not surprising that the progress of pupils in KS3 is less marked than the progress of pupils in KS2.

As in Chapter 5, we can look at the effect sizes related to these gains. For KS2 pupils, the effect size was 1.06, considerably higher than the suggested level of 0.25, indicating that the impact of attending *Playing for Success* on these pupils' ICT skills was educationally, as well as statistically, significant. The corresponding value for KS3 pupils was 0.55, again indicating an educationally significant effect.

As in earlier years, we can be reasonably certain that attending a *Playing for Success* Centre has a significant impact on pupils' ICT skills, for both KS2 and KS3 pupils.

All groups of pupils seemed to benefit from attending *Playing for Success*, although the extent of this varied somewhat.²

- The progress of boys and girls was similar (13.3 and 13.0 points respectively) when other factors such as age were taken into account.
- Pupils with no identified special needs made greater progress than similar pupils in the 2001 control group, by almost 17 points. When compared with similar pupils in the control group, the progress of pupils with identified special needs who were attending *Playing for Success* was less marked than this (about 8 points), but still highly statistically significant.
- Pupils from both White and ethnic minority backgrounds attending *Playing for Success* made greater progress than similar control group pupils (by about 13 points).
- The progress of pupils with English as their first language was 12.8 points greater than expected in comparison with the control group. Pupils with English as an additional language made considerably greater progress – their post-course scores were, on average, 23.2 points higher than would be expected in comparison with the control group.
- The progress of pupils entitled to free school meals was broadly similar to that of pupils not entitled (13.8 and 15.4 points respectively). Both groups made significantly greater progress in computer skills than did similar pupils in the 2001 control group.

6.3 Computer basics, word processing, using the internet and using email

Tables 6.3 to 6.6 show the mean scores for the four sub-scores making up the total ICT score.

Table 6.3 Summary results for computer basics

		Pre-course	Post-course	Progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Significance

² All gains are reported relative to those for similar pupils in the control group.

KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	171	11.0 (4.3)	14.0 (2.8)	3.1 (3.7)	p<0.001
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	192	13.1 (3.3)	14.8 (2.4)	1.7 (3.9)	p<0.001
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	363	12.1 (3.9)	14.4 (2.6)	2.3 (3.9)	p<0.001

Based on responses from 363 pupils in 11 Centres

Table 6.3 shows the computer basics scores. There were eight items in this section of the questionnaire, including statements such as: 'I can double click with a mouse in the right place to open a program' and 'I can load and use CD-ROMs'. Scores on this section could range from 0 to 16. The pre-course scores indicate that pupils were already confident in many of the listed skills before they attended the Centres. Nevertheless, pupils attending *Playing for Success* made significant progress in their basic computer skills and at the end of the course they felt confident to perform almost all the listed skills on their own.

Table 6.4 Summary results for word processing

		Pre-course	Post-course	Progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	171	19.7 (7.5)	26.5 (4.3)	6.8 (5.2)	p<0.001
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	192	24.3 (6.4)	28.0 (3.1)	3.7 (6.3)	p<0.001
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	363	22.1 (7.3)	27.3 (3.8)	5.2 (6.0)	p<0.001

Based on responses from 363 pupils in 11 Centres

The word processing section contained 15 statements, such as ‘I can type my own sentences’; ‘I can move words and sentences I have typed by using CUT and PASTE’ and ‘I can make my work look like a newspaper, with columns and pictures’. The maximum possible score for word processing was 30 points. The pre-course scores indicate that pupils attending *Playing for Success* were familiar with many of these skills at the pre-course stage. The post-course results are close to the maximum possible score, indicating that pupils who attended the Centres became confident in almost all the listed word processing skills.

Table 6.5 Summary results for internet

		Pre-course	Post-course	Progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	171	6.2 (5.0)	12.6 (3.0)	6.4 (4.8)	p<0.001
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	192	10.5 (5.2)	13.8 (2.7)	3.3 (4.6)	p<0.001
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	363	8.5 (5.5)	13.2 (2.9)	4.8 (4.9)	p<0.001

Based on responses from 363 pupils in 11 Centres

Table 6.5 shows results for internet skills. The internet section contained eight statements, such as: 'I can connect to the internet so that I can use the World Wide Web' and 'I can use a search engine to search for the information I want to find on the World Wide Web'. The maximum possible score for this section was 16.

The table shows that pupils were scoring about half the maximum points in this section at the pre-course stage (although younger pupils were much less confident than older pupils in internet skills). By the end of the course, pupils' scores had risen considerably, indicating their confidence in demonstrating most of the skills listed in this section.

Table 6.6 Summary results for email

		Pre-course	Post-course	Progress	
	N	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Mean (sd)	Significance
KS2 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	171	2.5 (3.1)	6.4 (3.2)	3.8 (3.8)	p<0.001
KS3 pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	192	4.9 (3.7)	7.4 (3.2)	2.6 (3.8)	p<0.001
All pupils attending <i>Playing for Success</i>	363	3.8 (3.6)	6.9 (3.2)	3.2 (3.9)	p<0.001

Based on responses from 363 pupils in 11 Centres

Table 6.6 shows the results for the email skills. There were five items in the email section, including: 'I can SEND emails by typing an address in the TO box and typing a message' and 'I can ATTACH FILES to the emails I send'. The maximum score was ten points. Pupils' pre-course scores indicate confidence in less than half of the listed email skills. By the end of the course, pupils felt confident to perform the majority of the listed email skills.

On all four sub-scales, the pre-course scores indicate that most pupils could already carry out a number of simple tasks before the start of the *Playing for Success* course. This was particularly evident for pupils in KS3. Nevertheless, pupils in both KS2 and KS3 made significant gains while attending *Playing for Success*, and this progress was significantly greater than the gains reported by the 2001 control group. There was a similar pattern across all four sub-scales.

The gains relative to the control group were all substantial, with effect sizes ranging from 0.48 for KS3 pupils on the using email sub-scale, to 0.98 for KS2 pupils on the same sub-scale. Effect sizes for the other three sub-scales were between these two values.

Compared with pupils in the control group, all groups of pupils appeared to be benefiting from attending *Playing for Success*, although there were variations in the magnitude of these gains.³

- Pupils in KS2 made greater progress than those in KS3.
- For all four sub-scales, the progress of boys and girls was similar when other factors (such as age) were taken into account.
- The additional progress of pupils attending *Playing for Success*, over and above that for similar pupils in the control group, was slightly greater for pupils with no identified special needs than for those with identified special needs.
- Pupils from both White and ethnic minorities made similar gains.

- The progress of pupils with English as their first language was rather less than that for pupils with English as an additional language, but still highly significant.
- Pupils entitled to free schools, and those not entitled, made about the same amount of progress, when compared with similar pupils in the control group.

³ All gains are reported relative to those for similar pupils in the control group.

6.4 Summary: Achievement in computer skills

Over 360 pupils attending *Playing for Success* in Spring 2002 completed a checklist of computer skills which covered four skill areas: computer basics; word processing; using the internet and using email. This chapter has presented results relating to pupils' scores on this checklist.

The post-course scores on the ICT checklist for pupils attending *Playing for Success* were significantly greater than their pre-course scores, for the total score and for each of the four sub-scales. The progress of these pupils was significantly greater than that shown by similar pupils in the 2001 control group.

All groups of pupils benefited from attending *Playing for Success* in relation to their self-reported ICT skills. This benefit was greatest for:

- younger pupils (i.e. those in KS2)
- those without identified special needs
- pupils with English as an additional language.

7 Discussion and conclusion

This is the fourth year in which the NFER has been responsible for the national evaluation of *Playing for Success*. Since its announcement in 1997, the initiative has grown from three pilot Centres to encompass the 58 operating in May 2002. Over 18500 pupils from 1103 schools took part in *Playing for Success* during 2001–2.

7.1 What did the national evaluation find this year?

The results from this evaluation study come from a sample of 12 Centres, including both established and new Centres. The evaluation focused on pupils attending during the Spring term of 2002. Most of the pupils attended courses lasting around 18 hours (courses were shorter this year, due to an early Easter). Attendance at these after-school sessions was good, with most pupils attending for at least 80 per cent of the course.

Information from the pupil questionnaire demonstrates that pupils had high expectations of the Centres and were not disappointed with the experience. They felt it had helped them in a variety of ways, including with literacy, numeracy and ICT. They enjoyed their time at the Centre and felt that the experience had helped them become more confident. Parents and schools had very positive views about the impact of the Centres on pupils. For example, 100 per cent of parents were pleased that their child had attended a Centre. Ninety-three per cent of teachers felt that pupils' ICT skills and self-confidence had improved as a result of attending *Playing for Success* and 100 per cent wanted to send pupils to the Centre in future.

The results from the tests, ICT self-assessment and attitude questionnaires demonstrate the positive impact of the initiative on pupils' learning and motivation. Progress was greatest in numeracy and in ICT skills. In these two areas, pupils not only made progress during their time at the Centres but also out-performed the control group to a significant

extent. The effect sizes for these results indicate that the progress achieved by pupils attending *Playing for Success* is of considerable educational significance.

In reading comprehension, pupils attending *Playing for Success* made significant progress between the beginning and end of the course. However, comparisons with the control group indicated that only the KS3 pupils had out-performed the control group to a statistically significant extent. Results from the attitude scales showed evidence of significant improvement in several respects (including reading enjoyment, writing confidence and mathematics confidence). When compared with the control group, the changes of greatest educational significance were evident in pupils' self-reported independent study skills (for both key stages) and self-image (KS2 pupils only).

7.2 Four years of evaluating *Playing for Success*

The national evaluation of *Playing for Success* began in 1998. Its two main aims were to provide an indication of the effectiveness of the initiative and to identify and describe the features which led to success. The first year's evaluation focused on the first six Centres and considered both the challenges of setting up the Centres in professional football clubs and the outcomes achieved by pupils attending them. Outcomes were measured by a combination of commercially-available tests (in mental arithmetic and reading) and instruments developed by the NFER (attitude scales and pupil, parent and school questionnaires).

The following year, the evaluation focused on the 12 largest of the 22 Centres operating at the time. Because the Centre Managers felt that the commercial tests used in the first year were too long and challenging for their intake of underachieving young people, the NFER team developed new tests designed to assess pupils' numeracy and reading comprehension. The tests were designed to be appropriate for the age-group (i.e. they were in keeping with the National Curriculum) and contained items at different levels of difficulty. These tests were trialled and age standardised using a sample of almost 2000 Year 6 and Year 9 pupils from national sample of schools with a similar achievement

profile to those sending pupils to *Playing for Success*. The NFER team also developed a checklist to measure pupils' ICT skills. The same set of instruments was used in the two subsequent evaluation studies.

The NFER, with the help of Centre Managers and schools, set up a control group in 1999–2000. The purpose of this was to establish whether pupils attending *Playing for Success* had made greater progress than would be expected if they had not attended. This was accomplished by comparing the progress achieved by pupils who had attended the Centres with that of a similar group of pupils who had not attended (the control group pupils were offered a place at the Centres in the following term). A control group was also established for the 2000–1 evaluation, which looked at the progress of pupils attending 27 Centres.

7.3 What do four years of evaluation tell us about the impact of *Playing for Success*?

The national evaluation has focused on pupils attending Centres during the Spring term. More than 5150 pupils, 1640 parents and 330 schools have taken part in the national evaluation in four years.

Despite the fact that the programme has experienced a period of rapid expansion, the evaluation findings are remarkably consistent from year to year. It is clearly a popular initiative that has engaged young people and enabled them to make considerable progress in their learning.

Playing for Success has proved very popular with all its client groups. This is apparent in a variety of findings. For example, the Centres have achieved high levels of attendance, despite the fact that pupils are making a voluntary commitment to attend in their free time. Pupils enjoy attending, parents are pleased that their children have been selected to participate and pupils, parents and schools all acknowledge that the initiative has benefited pupils' learning and self-confidence.

Pupils enjoy the experience of attending the Centres. In the first year's evaluation, the pupil questionnaire asked pupils to note anything they had not liked about the Centre: over a quarter of pupils chose not to answer and over a third said that there was nothing they had disliked. In subsequent years, we rephrased the question, asking pupils whether there was anything they felt could be improved. This provoked a protective response in some pupils, who made comments along the lines of 'Our Centre is good already, so please leave it alone'. The only consistent suggestion for 'improvement' (from both pupils and their parents) was that *Playing for Success* should be expanded so that more pupils could attend for longer periods of time.

Playing for Success set out to address the needs of underachieving young people in Years 6 to 9. It focused on improving pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT and on their attitudes and motivation to learn. Four years of national evaluation studies have shown significant improvement in pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT. Each year and in each of the three skill areas, pupils' results were significantly higher, on average, at the end of their time at the Centre.

Use of age-standardised numeracy and literacy tests has enabled us both to adjust the scores to take account of any improvement in post-course scores due to maturation, and to make comparisons with a national sample of pupils. Comparisons with a national distribution of scores has shown that, on average, the pupils selected to attend *Playing for Success* were achieving at a very low level compared with national norms in literacy and numeracy. By the end of the course, pupils' scores had risen closer to national norms and, in the case of numeracy scores, pupils in KS2 who attended *Playing for Success* were achieving at just below the expected level for their age.

Comparisons with the control group have shown that gains were greatest for ICT and numeracy. In these two areas, pupils out-performed the control group to a statistically significant extent. In reading comprehension, pupils made progress during their time at the Centres, but to a lesser extent. We considered the progress of pupils in each key

stage separately. In each of the three years when we made control-group comparisons, one of the two age-groups out-performed the control group in reading comprehension, but it was not always the same one. In the 1999–2000 evaluation, pupils in KS3 made greater progress than the control group in reading comprehension. In 2000–1, it was pupils in KS2 and in 2001–2, pupils in KS3 out-performed the control group to a statistically significant extent.

The greater gains in numeracy than in literacy are worthy of further comment. It may be that pupils were spending more of their time at the Centres working on numeracy than on literacy skills. We know that Centres tended to focus on mental arithmetic, numeracy, writing (composition) and reading skills. While improving mental arithmetic skills is likely to help pupils complete a numeracy test, there is not the same equivalence between improvements in writing and reading comprehension skills. Therefore the match between the learning experiences offered by the Centres and the content of the tests is closer for numeracy than for reading comprehension.

It also seems likely that it is easier to help pupils to make progress in numeracy skills, especially within a relatively short period of time. This view is supported by previous research, for example, Professor MacBeath's school improvement study (MacBeath, 2001) found that the amount of variance attributed to the influence of the school was much lower for reading (12 per cent) than for mathematics (33 per cent). To succeed in a test of reading comprehension, pupils need to call on a complex range of skills and conceptual understanding, including the ability to read text, understand and interpret meaning, put together ideas from different parts of the text, to draw inferences and use their general knowledge to make logical deductions. In comparison, numeracy is a relatively discrete area, and it may therefore be easier for pupils to make rapid progress in numeracy once they have grasped the concepts involved.

7.4 How have such large gains been possible?

The evidence suggests that *Playing for Success* made a significant difference to the progress of underachieving young people. By comparing their progress on the two tests to both a control-group sample and to national norms, it is possible to see whether the progress achieved is due to the impact of programme and to estimate the progress in relation to months of age. This is shown in Table 7.1

Table 7.1 Progress in months achieved by pupils attending *Playing for Success*

Year of evaluation	Reading comprehension		Numeracy	
	KS2	KS3	KS2	KS3
2000	ns	6	21	8
2001	15	ns	18	14
2002	ns	8	17	24

Based on test results for 2800 pupils

The table shows progress in months for pupils who out-performed the control group to a statistically significant extent. (The results for the first year's evaluation are excluded because it used different tests and did not include control-group comparisons.) The table shows that pupils attending *Playing for Success* made up to 15 months progress in reading comprehension and up to 24 months (two years) progress in numeracy. Yet most pupils only visit the Centres for about twenty hours in total. How has so much progress been possible in such a short time?

Comparisons with the control group have suggested that, without specific intervention, the scores of underachieving pupils tend to remain unchanged. As time goes on, they slip further and further behind the achievement expected for pupils of their age. This is indicated by the fact that the pre-course standardised scores of pupils in KS3 tended to be much lower than those of pupils in KS2. *Playing for Success* gives underachieving pupils an opportunity to make up some of the lost ground.

In the second year's evaluation, we carried out a qualitative study of pupils who had attended three *Playing for Success* Centres about a term before. We interviewed 39 pupils and their teachers. Pupils described how they had often got stuck on a particular concept at school. Failure to grasp basic concepts or skills held them back, and made them give up trying. They lost confidence in their ability to learn and kept their heads down in class rather than attempt to answer a question and risk getting it wrong.

In last year's evaluation report (Sharp *et al.*, 2002a) we set out a model of how *Playing for Success* encourages pupils to become more successful, independent learners. This was based on previous work relating the process of study support to the theory of 'self-regulated learning' (see Sharp *et al.*, 2002b).

From their first session at the Centres, young people begin to reengage with learning. They are given help designed to meet their particular learning needs. Most Centres use a target-setting process, whereby pupils are encouraged to identify the aspects of literacy and numeracy they find most difficult.

Pupils are motivated by the fact that they are gaining intrinsic rewards from learning, receiving feedback and making progress. They enjoy the learning tasks and relish the opportunity to use up-to-date computer facilities. Pupils also appreciate the support they receive from staff and mentors, finding them helpful, patient and encouraging. Pupils described how staff motivated them to keep trying, rather than giving up if they found something difficult at first. As one parent said: '*The best thing was the ever-supplied help and encouragement from all the staff and helpers who were never too busy to listen, and that is very important to a child.*'

Centre staff ensure that pupils understand the concept in question and pupils get the chance to practise and master the necessary skills. Staff also encourage pupils to become more active, independent learners. As a result they learn new skills and begin to regain

their confidence in their ability to succeed. Once pupils' potential is 'unlocked' in this way, they are able to make rapid progress in basic skills.

One of the pupils we spoke to in 2001 explained how the Centre had helped: *We did this question in maths at school. We did all this homework on it and everything but I just didn't understand. Then I went to the Centre and asked the Centre Manager. She explained how to do it in our sense of understanding and saying it. Then I understood, and now I know how to do it and I don't get low marks on it in my mental tests.*

7.5 Is *Playing for Success* equally beneficial for different groups of pupils?

The use of a relatively sophisticated approach to statistical analysis has enabled the evaluation to consider the progress of groups of pupils with different characteristics. We were interested to find out, for example, whether *Playing for Success* benefited girls as well as boys and whether pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (indicated by their eligibility for free school meals) made the same amount of progress as others. In doing so we were reliant on schools and Centres to provide us with information about each pupil attending *Playing for Success* in the Spring term or taking part in the control group study.

Producing the analysis was a considerable task, bearing in mind that there were up to 19 different pupil measures to consider in relation to five pupil characteristics (gender, free school meals, special educational needs, ethnicity and fluency in English).

Overall, the results have shown very few differences in the progress achieved by different groups attending *Playing for Success*. This suggests that the initiative has benefited both boys and girls, pupils eligible for free school meals and those not eligible, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as a first or additional language.

There were, however, a few differences apparent in the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Although the analyses have shown statistically significant differences in only a few measures each year, there is a consistent finding that pupils with identified special needs tend to make less progress while attending *Playing for Success*.

This year's evaluation study found that, compared with similar pupils in the control group, pupils with special needs made no significant progress in numeracy and reading comprehension. They also made less progress than pupils without special needs in their attitudes to reading enjoyment, independent study, popularity, self-image and self-confidence. Previous evaluation results indicated that pupils with special needs made significantly less progress in mental arithmetic (Year 1 evaluation), and in computer skills and attitudes to working with others (Year 3 evaluation).

It is important not to place too much importance on these findings. They may simply result from the fact that pupils with special needs (especially those with learning difficulties) tend to make small steps of progress. It is therefore more difficult for pupils with special needs to demonstrate progress on tests and self-assessment questionnaires. However, this may be an issue worthy of further consideration by Centre Managers when deciding which groups of pupils are likely to benefit most from the initiative and how best to support those pupils with special needs who attend.

7.6 How has the sports context influenced pupils' experiences?

One of the defining characteristics of *Playing for Success* is its association with professional sports venues. Starting as a football-related initiative, it has recently diversified to encompass other sports.

Most of the Centres participating in the evaluation studies have been based at football grounds and Centre Managers have used the environment and medium of football in a variety of ways. Common features include a tour of the ground, football-themed learning

tasks, and contact with players (most commonly during a celebration event at the end of the course).

Evidence from the evaluation suggests that the sporting connection is important in attracting pupils to want to take part in *Playing for Success*. When we asked pupils whether they were interested in football, a high proportion of pupils said they were (ranging from 73 to 86 per cent over the four years). A similar proportion of control group pupils expressed an interest in football, suggesting that this high level of interest arises from the ‘currency’ of football in popular culture, rather than from the simple fact that these pupils had just begun to attend *Playing for Success*.

Evidence from pupils, teachers and parents tells us that the football connection motivates pupils, and adds to the ‘wow factor’, especially in areas where the local football club has a strong fan base. As one pupil explained: ‘*I like [Football Club] and I could see what the players do and where they go. I wouldn’t go if it was at school because it would be just like school and you have to come to school every day.*’ Attending a sports venue means that pupils feel special and privileged to be chosen to participate, rather than stigmatised as in need of extra help. Pupils who attend are given an opportunity that makes them the envy of their friends.

The evaluation has shown that the sporting connection adds to the excitement and interest of the initiative. It gives *Playing for Success* a unique identity and provides potential for underachieving pupils to experience a new and different learning environment. Nevertheless other factors, particularly the learning programme, the help from staff/mentors and the ICT facilities on offer, are key components in the initiative’s success.

7.6.1 Does the sporting connection appeal equally to all?

Playing for Success is clearly attractive to girls as well as boys. This is apparent in the profile of pupils attending the Centres (the percentage of female attendees ranged from 45 to 50 per cent over the four years). The initiative has also attracted a proportion of

pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, reflecting the profile of pupils attending the schools which the Centres serve.

From the second year, the evaluation considered whether the sporting connection appealed equally to pupils of different ages, gender and ethnic background. The pre-course questionnaire asked pupils both whether they were interested in football, and to write in the name of the football team, if any, they supported. The same question was included in the second and third year's evaluation, but the format was changed slightly in the fourth year, to reflect the initiative's expansion to include sports other than football.

An analysis of the responses to this question showed that there were few differences between pupils from the two key stages, but there were differences in responses related to gender and ethnic background. We found gender-related differences in two of the three years, when boys were more likely than girls to say that they were interested in football. Even so, a majority of girls said they were interested in football each year (ranging from 60 to 85 per cent).

There was a strong and consistent pattern related to ethnic background: whereas pupils from different ethnic backgrounds were equally likely to say they were interested in football, pupils from White ethnic backgrounds were more likely to say they supported the Centre's team. This was particularly apparent in the current evaluation study, where only eight per cent of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, but 49 per cent of pupils from White backgrounds expressed support for their Centre's team. While the fact that team allegiance is related to ethnic background may not be surprising, this finding highlights a key issue for clubs seeking to address racism and to broaden their appeal throughout all sectors of the local community.

7.7 Looking to the future: what happens next?

These evaluation studies have focused on pupils' progress during their time at the Centres. The evaluation instruments were administered at the beginning and end of the course. We are therefore not in a position to demonstrate whether the progress achieved

is sustained once the initiative ends. This would need to be the focus of a separate research study.

However, there are some indications of continued impact from the second year's evaluation, when we gathered qualitative information from a group of pupils and their teachers a term after they had attended three Centres. The pupils said that they were continuing to build on the skills that they had learned in *Playing for Success*, especially in ICT, numeracy and literacy. Their teachers noticed improvements in pupils' skills, self-confidence and in their ability to work independently. What also emerged was the importance of the 'match' between the learning opportunities offered by the Centre and the school (for example, two groups of secondary pupils said they were unable to practise some of their ICT skills because the school's equipment was not of the same standard as that in the Centre.)

In order to help pupils consolidate their learning at *Playing for Success*, it would seem important that their schools are well informed about their progress and that they provide opportunities for pupils to use their skills. The school questionnaire asked teachers to rate the feedback they received on pupils' progress at the Centre. Schools' satisfaction with feedback improved from about 50 per cent of schools saying they received good feedback in the first year's evaluation to a consistent 73 per cent or more in subsequent years. This year we asked schools two additional questions about their liaison with the Centre. This revealed that many (67 per cent) had ensured that a member of staff visited the Centre during their pupils' course, but only about a quarter had planned any follow-up work with pupils, related to their work at the Centre. Feedback and liaison are clearly important issues for Centres and schools and for the initiative as a whole.

7.8 Conclusion

Playing for Success has proved to be a popular and effective initiative. It has sustained its appeal and impact during a period of rapid expansion, as it has grown from the first three pilot Centres to the 58 operating in 2001–2. The programme has earned a national and international reputation for helping underachieving young people. This is due to

many factors, not least to the work of individual Centre Managers, staff/mentors, pupils, teachers and schools. Considerable credit is also due to the DfES team responsible for coordinating the initiative. From the beginning they have promoted the core values of the initiative while allowing flexibility to meet local needs. They have also encouraged networking and development activities among Centres, especially through the important contribution of Critical Friends.

The NFER team has been privileged to work on the national evaluation for four years and we have enjoyed the challenge of designing new ways of capturing the achievements of a diverse and evolving programme. The evaluation findings have received thoughtful consideration by both the DfES and Centre Managers and recommendations for improvement have been acted upon. We wish *Playing for Success* continued success in future.

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Appendix 1

Analysis of progress compared to expectations

In the previous two years of evaluation of *Playing for Success* (Sharp *et al.*, 2001, 2002a), sophisticated multilevel models were fitted to the data to look at progress in a whole range of outcomes compared with a control group, while taking account of background factors at the pupil and Centre level. This has given a number of valuable insights into the kinds of changes associated with *Playing for Success*, but has of necessity required the collection of a substantial amount of data from Centres which could be regarded as representative of *Playing for Success* as a whole.

For the current evaluation, there is less data than in previous years, and this data has been provided by a group of Centres which are neither homogeneous nor particularly representative. The main focus of the data analysis has been to confirm that the effects found in previous years have broadly been carried forward in these Centres, and to identify any possible differences. To this end, a simpler style of analysis has been used, leaning heavily on the data from the third year's evaluation study, conducted in 2001 (Sharp *et al.*, 2001).

The main thrust of the analysis has been to look at progress in each of the 19 outcome measures in 2002, compared with what would have been expected based on the progress made by pupils in the 2001 'control group'.

The basic steps carried out for this analysis were as follows.

1. For each of the 19 outcomes, we fitted a simple regression model to the **control group** progress values in 2001, controlling for sex, special educational needs (SEN), ethnicity (White/ethnic minority), English as an additional language and key stage.⁴
2. For each outcome, we used the regression model to estimate, for each pupil in the 2002 analysis, their *expected progress* (i.e. the progress they would have achieved if they had been in the 2001 control group) and we subtracted this from their actual progress.
3. We computed means and standard deviations of these ‘actual minus expected’ values and tested the significance of those means against zero. If the mean ‘actual minus expected’ score for a group of pupils is significantly different from zero, we can say that the 2002 *Playing for Success* pupils are making more progress than expected, relative to the 2001 control group.

Tables A1 and A2 below show those outcomes, at KS2 and KS3 respectively, where significant progress was made relative to the 2001 control group. They also contain effect sizes (Cohen, 1969) values, which are obtained by dividing the average progress made, above expectations, by the standard deviation of the outcome prior to attending a Centre.

⁴ For each outcome measure, background variables were included in the regression analysis only where they showed a significant relationship with the outcome.

Table A1 Outcomes for *Playing for Success* 2002 with significant progress compared with the 2001 control group (KS2)

Outcome	Actual progress – expected progress	sd of outcome pre-PfS	Effect size	Number of pupils
Numeracy	8.13	12.34	0.66	141
Reading enjoyment	0.61	4.01	0.15	145
Writing confidence	0.50	2.48	0.20	145
Mathematics confidence	0.53	3.44	0.15	145
Independent study skills	0.97	2.46	0.39	145
Popularity	0.48	3.39	0.14	145
Self-image	0.58	2.00	0.29	145
Total ICT scores	17.84	16.78	1.06	171
Computer basics	2.84	4.30	0.66	171
Word processing	6.29	7.47	0.84	171
Using the internet	4.68	4.97	0.94	171
Using email	3.06	3.11	0.98	171

Table A2 Outcomes for *Playing for Success* 2002 with significant progress compared with the 2001 control group (KS3)

Outcome	Actual progress – expected progress	sd of outcome pre-PfS	Effect size	Number of pupils
Numeracy	11.39	12.74	0.89	125
Reading comprehension	3.98	15.44	0.26	148
Reading enjoyment	0.53	4.48	0.12	162
Independent study skills	0.77	2.80	0.27	162
Self-image	0.36	2.45	0.15	162
Self-confidence	0.38	2.57	0.15	162
Total ICT score	8.99	16.41	0.55	192
Computer basics	1.44	3.31	0.44	192
Word processing	3.21	6.41	0.50	192
Using the internet	2.80	5.16	0.54	192
Using email	1.81	3.74	0.48	192

It should be emphasised that the above analyses were carried out in a relatively simple fashion in order to get a broad indication of progress achieved across the diverse group of Centres evaluated in the fourth year. Detailed investigations of the progress made by different groups, for example, should be treated with caution due to the smaller numbers involved and the relatively unsophisticated nature of the analysis.

Appendix 2

The pupil attitude questionnaire

The pupil questionnaire ‘What YOU Think’ used a number of statements to collect information about pupils’ attitudes to the Centre and to reading, writing, mathematics, study skills and self-esteem. Questionnaires were administered at the beginning and end of the course. Pupils were asked to respond to each statement using a three-point scale (yes, not sure, no). Answering ‘yes’ to a positively-worded statement yielded one point, ‘not sure’ scored no points and ‘no’ yielded a score of -1. This appendix provides further information about composition of the attitude statements.

The statements in the questionnaire were based on existing instruments, developed by the NFER to evaluate other initiatives. Where no suitable instruments existed, we derived new ones. The pupil attitude questionnaire in 2002 was based on the questionnaire used in *Playing for Success* in 2000 and 2001.

Factor analysis was carried out on pupils’ attitudes for each of the five sections in the questionnaire. For each section, analysis was carried out using the pre-course responses because we did not expect much variation between pre- and post-course factors. The factor analysis served as a guide on how to construct a number of different scale scores. The reliabilities of these scale scores (assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha) are reported in Sharp *et al.* (2002). Please note that we have re-ordered the items to reflect the composition of the attitude scales – it is not the same order in which the items appeared in the questionnaire.

A2.1 The reading section

The first section contained 11 statements referring directly to pupils' attitudes towards reading. The section on reading drew on a series of attitude statements that had been devised for evaluating the Government's Summer School programme (Sainsbury *et al.*, 1999). The results from the factor analysis of the reading section are summarised below, to show the statements contributing to the reading factors.

Two factors emerged from the analysis, which we named Reading Enjoyment and Reading Confidence.

Factor 1: Reading Enjoyment

- I like reading stories
- I like reading information books
- I like watching TV better than reading (negative loading)
- Books are fun
- I only read at school (negative loading)
- I like going to the library
- How often do you read books at home? (Every day, most days, not often, never)
- I like reading by myself

Factor 2: Reading Confidence

- I like reading by myself
- I can work out hard words by myself
- I am a good reader
- Reading is hard for me (negative loading)

Most of the statements are worded positively (for example: 'I like reading stories'). However, the questionnaire also included a few negatively-worded statements, such as: 'I only read at school'. Pupils' answers to these questions were re-scored, so that a negative response to a negative statement counted towards a positive factor score.

Factor 1, 'Reading Enjoyment', was made up of eight statements. The reading enjoyment score is calculated from the responses to eight items. This factor contained one statement that was presented in a different format to the rest. For the statement, 'How often do you read books at home?' pupils were asked to tick a box relating to reading frequency (every day, most days, not often, never), which was scored from 1 to 4. Scores on this factor could range from -7 to 11. The Cronbach's Alpha for this factor was 0.76, indicating a high internal consistency. In other words, we can be reasonably confident that the statements are measuring the same underlying factor.

The second factor, 'Reading Confidence', comprised four statements, and scores could range from -4 to 4. (Note that the statement 'I like reading by myself' is included in both the factors, indicating that it entails both enjoyment and confidence.) The internal consistency of this factor was 0.62.

A2.2 The writing section

Pupils' attitudes towards writing were assessed using 11 statements, devised by the evaluation team.

Factor 1: Writing Confidence

- Spelling is hard for me (negative loading)
- I can spell most words correctly
- I am good at writing letters to people
- It is hard for me to write down what I want to say (negative loading)
- Writing stories is hard for me (negative loading)

Factor 2: Writing Enjoyment

- Writing stories is hard for me (negative loading)
- I like writing stories
- Writing stories is boring (negative loading)

Factor 3: Punctuation

- I can use full stops
- I can use commas
- I can use capital letters
- I can use speech marks

The analysis revealed three factors, which we named: ‘Writing Confidence’; ‘Writing Enjoyment’; and ‘Punctuation’. Note that the statement ‘Writing stories is hard for me’ is included in both the Writing Confidence and Writing Enjoyment scales. Scores could range from -5 to 5 (Writing Confidence), -3 to 3 (Writing Enjoyment) and -4 to 4 (Punctuation). The internal consistency of these factors was 0.63, 0.72 and 0.65 respectively.

A2.3 The mathematics section

Pupils’ attitudes towards mathematics were assessed using ten statements. As with the reading statements, these had also been previously used in the first and second year’s evaluations of *Playing for Success* (Sharp *et al.*, 1999, 2001) and were originally based on the national evaluation of the Summer Schools initiative (Sainsbury *et al.*, 1999). The results of the factor analysis for these statements can be seen below.

Factor 1: Mathematics Confidence

- Maths is hard for me (negative loading)
- I can solve maths problems
- Maths is usually easy for me
- I feel worried in maths lessons (negative loading)
- I am good at mental arithmetic
- I am good at maths

Factor 2: Mathematics Enjoyment

- I am good at maths
- I like maths
- I really enjoy maths
- Maths is boring (negative loading)
- I like most subjects better than maths (negative loading)

Two factors emerged, which we named ‘Mathematics Confidence’ and ‘Mathematics Enjoyment’. It can be seen that ‘Mathematics Confidence’ is made up of six statements and ‘Mathematics Enjoyment’ is made up of five. Scores for ‘Mathematics Confidence’ could range from -6 to 6, and those for ‘Mathematics Enjoyment’ from -5 to 5. The statement ‘I am good at maths’ was included in both factors, implying that it is related to both confidence and enjoyment. Both factors had high Cronbach’s Alpha scores. The internal consistency for Mathematics Confidence was 0.83 and for Mathematics Enjoyment was 0.85.

A2.4 The study skills section

This section looked at pupils’ attitudes towards their study skills and asked how competent they felt carrying out basic study skill tasks. The section consisted of 14 statements, and was developed specifically for the previous evaluations of *Playing for Success*. The statements revealed two underlying factors measuring pupils’ attitudes to study skills.

Factor 1: Working with Others

- I can answer questions in class
- I can work as part of a team
- I can ask for help when I get stuck
- I can explain things to other people
- I can listen to other people

- I can speak to small groups
- I can speak to large groups
- I can ask questions in class
- I can follow instructions

Factor 2: Independent Study Skills

- I can follow instructions
- I can set targets for my work
- I can plan my work
- I can read my first draft and decide how to improve it
- I can find out information to help me do my work
- I can work by myself.

The two factors which emerged from the analysis were labelled ‘Working with others’ and ‘Independent study skills’. The scales have a score range of -9 to 9 (Working with others) and -6 to 6 (Independent study skills). The statement ‘I can follow instructions’ is included in both factors. The internal consistency of Working with Others was 0.70 and of Independent study skills was 0.65.

A2.5 Self esteem

The section on self esteem was based on statements devised by two groups of US and Australian researchers (Huebner *et al.*, 1999; Marsh 1988, 1990). We sought permission from the authors to adapt their instruments for use in this evaluation. Statements were selected from the scales and the wording was amended to reflect English usage in the UK. There were 16 statements used to measure self esteem.

Factor 1: Popularity

- Most other people of my age like me
- I am good at making new friends

- I am popular with people of my own age
- In general I like being the way I am
- I often feel left out (negative loading)
- I wish people liked me more than they do (negative loading)
- Other people think I am a good person
- A lot of things about me are good.

Factor 2: Self-image

- Other people think I am a good person
- A lot of things about me are good
- When I do something I do it well
- I am as good at school work as I want to be
- I can usually do my homework
- I have good ideas.

Factor 3: Self-confidence

- I often feel left out (negative loading)
- I wish people liked me more than they do (negative loading)
- I wish I did better at school (negative loading)
- I worry about meeting new people (negative loading)
- At times I think I am no good at all (negative loading)

Three factors emerged from the analysis. These factors were named ‘Popularity’, ‘Self-image’ and ‘Self-confidence’.

Factor 1 (Popularity) included eight statements and scores could range from -8 to 8. The internal consistency of this factor was 0.73. Factor 2 (Self-image) included six statements (scores from -6 to 6) and its internal consistency was 0.61. Factor 3 (Self-confidence) included five statements, so scores could range from -5 to 5. The internal consistency of this factor was 0.57.

Factor 3 consisted entirely of negatively worded items. The analysis ensured that these were negatively coded, so that a positive score on this factor would denote a positive sense of self-confidence.

Two statements contributed to both Factor 1 (Popularity) and Factor 3 (Self-confidence). These were 'I often feel left out' and 'I wish people liked me more than they do'. Two statements contributed to both Factor 1 (Popularity) and Factor 2 (Self-image). These were 'Other people think I am a good person' and 'A lot of things about me are good'.

Appendix 3

Participants in the evaluation

Study Support Centres which participated in the 2001–2002 outcome evaluation

Batley Bulldogs RLFC

Birmingham City FC

Blackburn Rovers FC

Durham CCC

Ipswich Town FC

Leeds Rhinos RLFC

Leeds United FC

Port Vale FC

Portsmouth FC

Stoke City FC

Tottenham Hotspur FC

Watford FC

Steering Group members

Julia Bateson	<i>Watford FC Study Support Centre</i>
David Carley	<i>DfES</i>
Ian Cockburn	<i>Newfield School</i>
Ian Drummond	<i>DfES</i>
Rex Hall	<i>Critical Friend</i>
Tony Kirwan	<i>Quality in Study Support</i>
Saied Laher	<i>Kirklees LEA</i>
Alison Lockwood	<i>DfES</i>
Tim Shiles	<i>DfES</i>
Steve Smith	<i>Leeds United Study Support Centre</i>

NFER team members

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Jenny Blackmore	Anna McCaulay
Catherine Cox	Ian Schagen
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Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

ISBN: 1 84185 924 9
Ref No: RR402

www.dfes.go.uk/research