ImpactEd Evaluation

St George's, University of London

Primary Practice – 23/24 Impact Report

February 2025

www.evaluation.impactedgroup.uk

Executive Summary

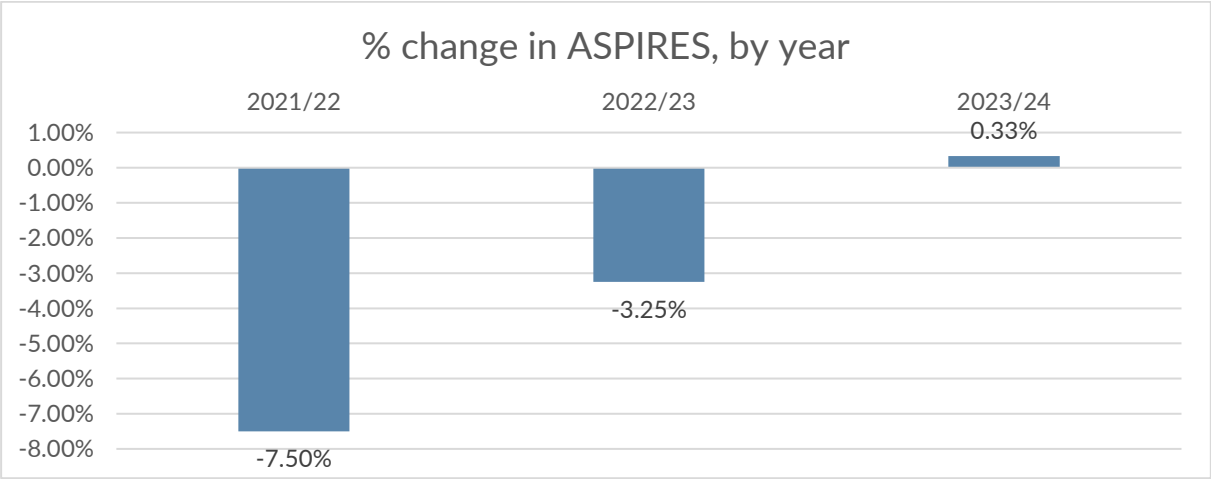
Overview

The Primary Practice programme, now in its third year, delivers a 12-month intervention supporting pupils from under-represented backgrounds in healthcare education. The evaluation of programme is delivered in collaboration between St George's (now City St George's), University of London, an independent medical and healthcare university within the University of London, and ImpactEd Evaluation, an organisation dedicated to helping education organisations do more of what works. The programme aims to facilitate successful primary-to-secondary school transitions whilst building healthcare knowledge through practical learning experiences.

Key findings – understanding of science and healthcare

Pupils maintained consistent levels of scientific understanding throughout the programme, marking an improvement from previous years' declining trends. Observational insights highlighted pupils' nuanced grasp of healthcare and disability concepts, though understanding of hidden disabilities' practical implications remained an area for development.

1. In 23/24, Primary Practice participants' understanding of science and healthcare stayed constant (+0.33 percentage points). This was not statistically significant (p = 0.88, n = 35).
2. Pupils showed a nuanced understanding of healthcare and disability, with participants demonstrating the ability to identify various medical and neurodivergent conditions while showing genuine engagement with the topic.
3. Pupils' comprehension was limited by a notable gap in understanding the practical implications and daily support needs of individuals with hidden disabilities, suggesting the need for more in-depth learning experiences.
4. While pupils' understanding of science and healthcare remained the same in 2023/24, this represents an encouraging shift from the declining trends observed in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

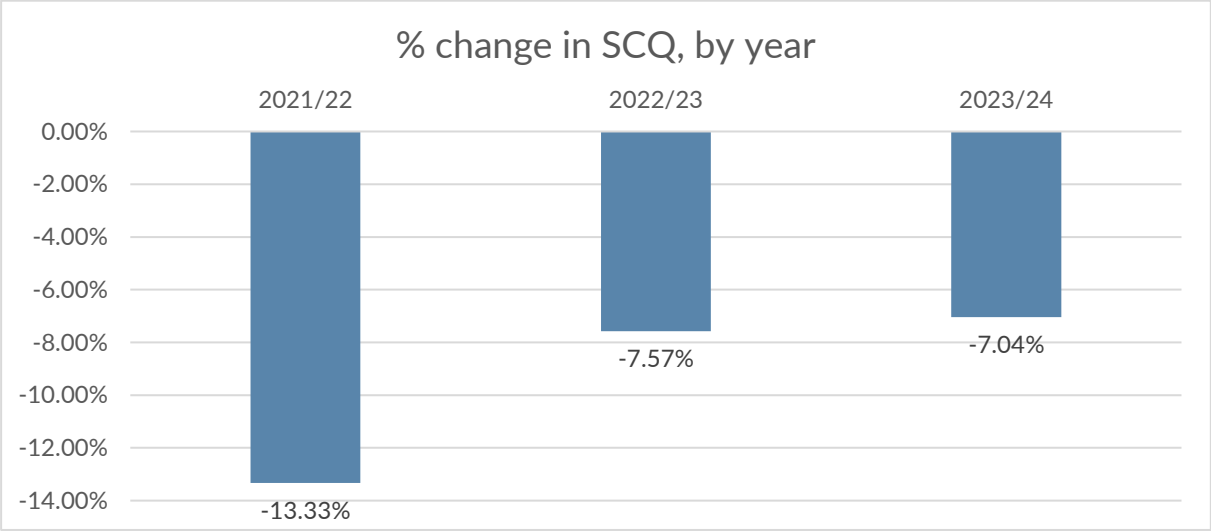


Key findings – transition to secondary school

The programme demonstrated statistically significant success in preparing pupils for secondary school life, evidenced through both quantitative data and corroborating feedback from parents and student ambassadors. Whilst anxiety reduction amongst pupils was observed, the effect was less pronounced compared to previous years. Notable improvements were documented in pupils' social confidence, teamwork, and leadership capabilities.

1. In 23/24, Primary Practice participants experienced a decrease in worrying about secondary school (-7.04 percentage points.) This was not statistically significant (p = 0.05, n = 28).

2. Pupils worry decreased at a lesser rate in 23/24 than in previous years.



3. Pupils knew more on what to expect at secondary school (+17.42 percentage points) by the end of the programme. This was statistically significant (p < 0.05, n = 33).

4. Student ambassadors observed pupils becoming increasingly confident in handling typical secondary school scenarios, such as going to the canteen and working in groups with new people.

5. The programme demonstrated success in boosting pupils' confidence about starting secondary school, with preparedness increasing by 24.32 percentage points. This substantial improvement was statistically significant (p < 0.05, n = 37).

6. Pupils increased their social confidence, teamworking, and leadership skills but there was limited evidence indicating whether pupils' resilience had increased.

Introduction

About the Organisations

St George's (now City St George's) is an independent medical and healthcare university, affiliated with the University of London. With a strong historical commitment to widening participation activities, St George's is now increasingly working across the whole student lifecycle to support pupils from under-represented backgrounds.

ImpactEd is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to improve pupil outcomes by addressing the evaluation deficit in education. ImpactEd works in partnership across the education sector to support high-quality monitoring and evaluation that informs decisions about what will work most effectively to support pupils. Their work in access and widening participation has included evaluation projects with University College London, Goldsmiths University and London South Bank University among others.

Programme Overview

Primary Practice is a 12-month programme targeted at pupils from backgrounds under-represented in higher education. The aim of the Primary Practice programme is to help pupils develop the skills required for a positive and successful transition from primary to secondary school, while also building their knowledge of medicine and healthcare. It is formed by four components:

- After-school club (ASC): February – March 2024
- Taster day: May 2024
- Summer School (SuSc): July 2024
- Graduation ceremony: December 2024

The short-term outcomes for the programme include the participants acquiring and developing new study skills, experiencing and overcoming challenges, becoming more confident when meeting new children and adults in an educational setting, and improving knowledge of medicine and healthcare.

In the long-term, it is hoped that a smoother transition to secondary school will contribute to participants' educational success and ultimately increase access to higher education for disadvantaged & under-represented groups. In 2024, the programme was delivered in 4 primary schools to a cohort of approximately 42 pupils.

Evaluation Background and Aims

ImpactEd partnered with SGUL in 2019 to create a robust evaluation of Primary Practice. This process began by identifying key outcomes and appropriate measuring tools. Due to COVID-19, the programme was halted during the academic year 2020/21, and then began again in 2021/22, and has continued in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This report is therefore the third full evaluation of the programme in its current form.

Early in the partnership, both parties agreed on a set of evaluation principles which would underpin this work:

- The approach should be repeatable and manageable. It should not be a major additional burden on stakeholders or pupils.
- The evaluation should take a pragmatic approach to implementation ensuring that it is easy to put into practice.
- The evaluation should use robust methodologies, including the use of academically validated scales.
- The approach should not rely on pupils' prior attainment data such as SATs scores.

The 2023/24 evaluation is focused on the following outcomes for one key stakeholder groups:

Pupils

- Improved readiness to transition to secondary school;
- Increased understanding of science and healthcare;
- Increased resilience;
- Increased confidence;
- Improved teamworking skills;
- Increased self-efficacy and academic confidence.

Methodology

This section will present the outcome measures, the evaluation design for data collection and analysis, as well as the limitations of the approach.

Outcome Measures

The table below shows the key outcomes in this evaluation for relevant stakeholders and how they will be measured using both quantitative and qualitative measures.

Stakeholder	Outcome	Quantitative Measure	Qualitative Measure
Pupil	Improved readiness to transition to secondary school	School Concerns Questionnaire	Observation Parent / Carer Interviews Student Ambassador focus groups
	Increased understanding of science and healthcare	ASPIRES Custom questions	
	Increased resilience	-	
	Increased confidence	-	
	Increased teamworking skills	-	
	Increased self-efficacy and academic confidence	-	

Evaluation Design

This evaluation is the third annual evaluation of the programme. The evaluation design for 2023/24 was adapted to align with the recommendations from last year's report:

22/23 recommendation	23/24 adaptation
Where there are multiple options for endline data for an individual pupil, IEE and St George's to decide on an order of preference for each survey.	A new order of preference for which endline to use for each survey was decided on. This order is outlined in the 'Matching Data' section below.
Do more to investigate the positive trend around confidence and social skills.	An observation of one of the after-school sessions was conducted to explore this further.

The programme being evaluated was delivered in 2023/24, the data for this evaluation was collected from February to December 2024, and the analysis for this evaluation was conducted in December and January 2024.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The design approach allowed us to make relatively robust inferences; by collecting a range of datapoints, we were able to triangulate findings and assess if there were common patterns.

Three types of data have been analysed:

- **Survey data** was used to evaluate the impact of the programme on pupils' understanding of science and healthcare, as well as their readiness to transition to secondary school.
- **Qualitative research** was used to evaluate pupils' non-cognitive skills.
- **Direct observation** of a session was used to evaluate pupils' non-cognitive skills and understanding of science and healthcare.

Evaluation Rhythm

This table shows when data was collected. For ASPIRES, SCQ and Custom Questions, this is when the participants completed a survey. February 2024 is at before the after-school club began, April 2024 is just after the after-school club ended, July 2024 is after the summer-school ended and November – December 2024 is when the graduation event took place.

Measure	February 2024	April 2024	July 2024	November – December 2024
ASPIRES	x	x	x	x
SCQ	x		x	x
Custom Questions	x	x	x	x
Parent Interviews				x
Ambassador Focus Group				x

Pupil Survey: Design, Sample and Analysis

Validated Surveys

The outcomes focusing on pupils' understanding of healthcare and science as well as transitioning to secondary school were measured using validated questionnaires. Full details of survey can be found in the appendix.

Tool	Measurement Details
ASPIRES	The ASPIRES survey comes from a 5-year longitudinal study which seeks to trace and track changes in pupils' interest in science and in scientific careers over the key period of

	ages 10–14. This study was initially housed by King's College London and is now based at the Institute of Education (IOE) at University College London (UCL).
SCQ	The School Concerns Questionnaire asks pupils to self-report their feelings about commonly reported concerns about secondary school. It was designed specifically to evaluate targeted school-based initiatives that aim to promote positive secondary transition. This tool was initially developed by Buckinghamshire Council (see Thomasson, R., Field, L., O'Donnell, C., & Woods, S. (2006), School Concerns Questionnaire, Buckinghamshire County Council). It was then tested for validity (see Rice F, Frederickson N, Seymour J (2011), 'Assessing pupil concerns about transition to secondary school', British Journal of Educational Psychology, 81: 244-63).

Custom Questions

This academic year (2023/24), pupils participating in the Primary Practice programme were asked two questions around their thoughts and feelings around starting secondary school.

Pupils were provided with two statements:

1. I feel prepared for starting secondary school.
2. I know what to expect at secondary school.

They then rated their agreement with each statement on the following 5-point scale:

- "Not at all true"
- "A little true"
- "Somewhat true"
- "Pretty true"
- "Really True"

Matching Data

Complete responses from each survey time point were matched to maximize the analysable dataset while maintaining data quality. The table below shows the **number of complete responses per questionnaire** at each time point.

	Baseline	Endline(s)		
Survey Data	February 2024	April 2024	July 2024	November – December 2024
ASPIRES	41	24	23	23
SCQ	38	0	25	25
Custom Questions	42	27	25	27

The second principle addressed participants with multiple endpoint measurements. Rather than arbitrarily selecting a single timepoint as the endpoint, we needed a systematic approach to match and analyse these data. When participants had several potential endpoint

measurements, IEE and St George's established this priority order for selecting every individuals' endpoint data.

Survey Data	April 2024	July 2024	November – December 2024
ASPIRES	**2nd**	**1st**	**3rd**
SCQ	**n/a**	**1st**	**2nd**
Custom Questions	**3rd**	**2nd**	**1st**

This table presents the number of pupils' final measurements that were taken at different points in time. The timing of each pupil's final measurement was determined using our agreed priority system, as outlined above.

Survey Data	April 2024	July 2024	November – December 2024
ASPIRES	8	23	4
SCQ	n/a	25	4
Custom Questions	7	3	27

Differentiating Types of Participants

This evaluation was interested in comparing the outcomes between participants who just attended the ASC and those who *also* attended the SuSc. Participants that provided any answers to any questionnaire at TP3 (Post SuSc) qualified as a SuSc participant. All participants who provided no answers to TP3 qualified as ASC participants. It is important to make explicit that SuSc participants are those who received a **higher dosage** of the Primary Practice programme, and those who are ASC participants received a **lower dosage** of the Primary Practice programme.

Longitudinal Analysis of Quantitative Data

Where data is available from 2021/22 and 2022/23, comparison has been drawn across the two years of the evaluation.

Qualitative Research: Design, Sample and Analysis

1:1 online interviews were conducted with two parents or carers of participating pupils. Six ambassadors participated in a focus group where they were asked questions on their experience of the programme and their perception of their pupils.

The qualitative data was analysed using a deductive thematic approach, meaning that we systematically 'coded' the data to find common themes and presented these, drawing on examples where appropriate.

The results of the validated surveys will be supplemented by the qualitative data that has been drawn out by two interviews with parents of participating pupils and the focus group with six student ambassadors.

Direct Observation

In March 2024, an IEE practitioner conducted an in-person observation of one of the after-school club sessions. The qualitative data was analysed using a deductive thematic approach.

Limitations

- There is no control or comparison group.
- Forming a singular endline group consisting of data that comes from multiple time points means that endlines are not like-for-like.
- This evaluation uses pupil self-report surveys. It cannot be guaranteed that pupils have fully understood each question or taken the time to reflect on their answers.
- Small sample sizes, particularly for parent focus groups.

Process and Implementation

This section outlines parent and student ambassadors' perception Primary Practice's delivery. It also provides a summary of the observational data undertaken.

Parent Perception

This section presents findings from interviews with parents and student ambassadors, alongside observational data, to provide insight into the programme's implementation. The analysis explores both the practical aspects of delivery and the programme's atmosphere, whilst also examining teachers' motivations for participating.

Parents provided positive feedback about multiple aspects of the programme's structure and delivery. They particularly valued the after-school club format for its accessibility.

> *"The after school club works well because I think their attendance will be slightly higher. I think because it's just slightly after school. You know, there's no kind of like distractions of anything else." – Parent*

Their children's enthusiasm was evident through excited discussions at home about the practical activities, which offered unique experiences beyond typical school curriculum.

> *"[The participant] came back home talking about it with such excitement and enthusiasm. It was just really good to see the love that [the participant] had." - Parent*

Parents appreciated the proficiency of the instructors and noted how children felt special in the adult-centred environment, especially during experiences like visiting the university cafeteria.

> *"It was just them as children and everyone else was an adult there. So they probably felt so important." - Parent*

The summer school's longer format was praised for allowing deeper engagement with activities.

Regarding areas for improvement, parents suggested several enhancements to the programme. They recommended expanding the healthcare content to cover broader topics and physical health management in greater depth.

> *"I want it to get a bit more deeper in terms of healthcare, in terms of physical health needs, in terms of how to manage care." - Parent*

Some parents noted a potential dip in enthusiasm during the gap between the after-school club and summer school. Social considerations were raised, with some children feeling separated from friends.

> *"I think maybe because her friends were in other groups that made her feel she wasn't with people she knew." - Parent*

Parents suggested implementing pre-programme surveys to better align content with pupils' interests.

> *"I'd be interested to see what the kids want to learn more because that might you know, it be more tailored to their interests and their learning." - Parent*

They also expressed wanting to see an increase in the programme's capacity to accommodate more children.

Student Ambassador Perception

The ambassadors demonstrated strong commitment to the programme, driven by their enjoyment of working with children, their dedication to widening participation, the professional development opportunities through St George's, and - for returning ambassadors - their firsthand experience of the programme's positive impact in previous years.

> *"I love working with children. And it was a role that kind of combined like the fun parts of working with kids, with also the serious parts of learning about important things." – Student ambassador*

> *"I did Science Stars last year and I really enjoyed that and I felt like this would be similar but with a different age group and teaching different thing." – Student ambassador*

> *"So I really enjoyed seeing the impact it had on my actors, on the school from the after school session to the summer school." – Student ambassador*

> *"I'm also really passionate about widening participation" – Student ambassador*

Student ambassadors reported an overwhelmingly positive experience delivering the programme, particularly valuing the opportunity to blend elements of fun and adventure with educational content.

> *"Meeting a different large range of students and it was really interesting seeing how some students were really engaged. Some students maybe weren't as interested, but it was just a good opportunity to get to know them a little bit more about their age group and about their interests and stuff like that." – Student ambassador*

> *"[It was] interesting learning how to manage different kids, learning needs and make sure that everyone gets what they should from the lesson." – Student ambassador*

> *"I think it was very interesting how, as the sessions went on, we kind of managed to incorporate fun and adventure with learning. So we started playing games that were related obviously to the topic of that week." – Student ambassador*

They highlighted the professional development aspect of learning to adapt their teaching approaches for different pupil needs, describing this as a valuable skill-building opportunity.

The experience also enabled them to develop deeper insights into this specific age group, allowing them to better understand pupils' interests and engage with diverse learner personalities.

Student ambassadors expressed high levels of confidence in their preparation, attributing this to well-structured training sessions delivered by St George's and early formation of delivery teams. The comprehensive preparation included interactive sessions, clear lesson plans, and practical examples of activities, supported by effective resources including booklets and

digital content. They identified several successful elements in their delivery approach, including the use of continuous storylines and characters to link learning across sessions, incorporating mini-competitions between teams, and addressing challenging vocabulary at the start of sessions. The group chat proved valuable for collaborative planning, while working in teams enhanced their delivery capability.

> *"The training was laid out really well that when we went to the sessions, we didn't feel like apprehensive to start."*

Ambassadors identified a few areas where the programme delivery could have been improved. Two related to logistical improvements: dependency on school staff's attendance delayed start of the club, and the restrictions from the schools' internet connection meant that some suggested programme content was blocked. One teacher flagged that approaches relating to mindfulness could be incorporated into pupils learning about going into new environments.

After-school club observation

In Spring 2024, ImpactEd Evaluation attended an after-school club that was part of the programme. We noted that the session took place in a welcoming and structured classroom environment, with pupils arranged in clustered table formations across the room. The atmosphere was notably calm and relaxed, creating a safe space conducive to learning. The group consisted of eight pupils in total, with a mix of three to four girls and five to six boys. This small group size allowed for personalised attention and created an environment where pupils appeared comfortable and happy to participate in the club activities.

The pupils demonstrated strong initial engagement with the session, particularly during the sign language video presentation. They showed genuine curiosity and initiative, with several pupils asking thoughtful questions such as "How do you say, 'what's your name' in sign language?" and attempting to replicate signs unprompted. However, engagement levels fluctuated as the session progressed, particularly among some of the male pupils. Whilst there were multiple instances of active contribution to class discussions, some pupils remained hesitant to raise their hands. Towards the end of the session, there were occasional instances of off-task behaviour, including chatting, whispering, and slouching, though these distractions remained minimal. Despite these challenges, several pupils demonstrated growing confidence in their ability to use basic sign language.

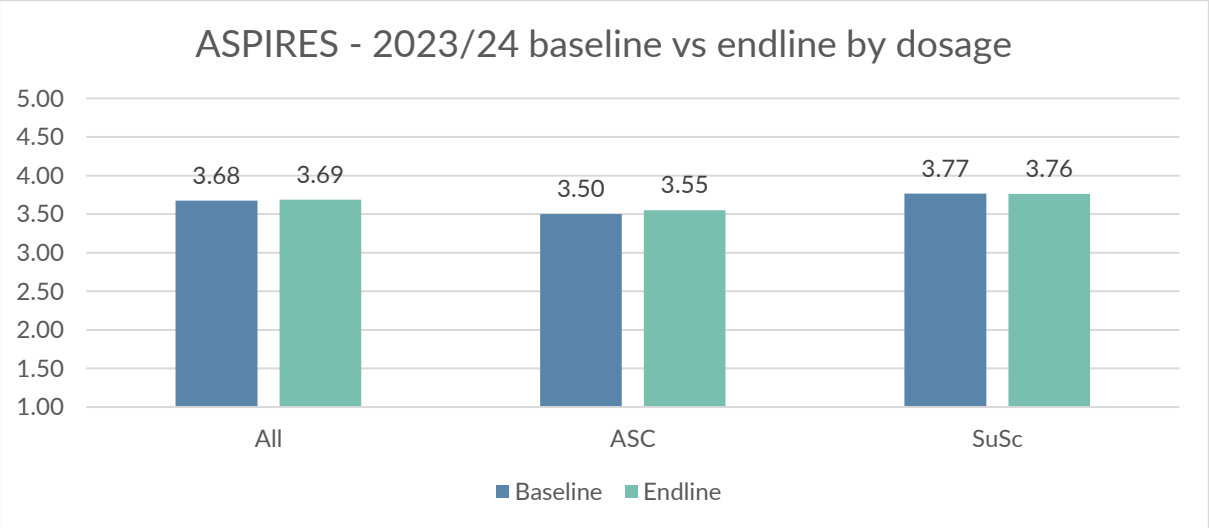
This observation indicates the level of delivery of the after-school club is giving the pupils the tools and support they need to do well.

Understanding of Science and Healthcare Outcomes

Primary Practice was designed to enhance pupils' understanding of science and healthcare through hands-on, interactive learning experiences. Broadly, in 2023/24 pupils' overall understanding did not change across the programme. This is a positive change in comparison to previous years, where, on average, pupils' understanding decreased across the programme. This year, with observations, we were able to identify some of the understanding pupils had gained or had not quite grasped. They showed nuanced understanding of healthcare and disability but demonstrated a notable gap in understanding the practical implications and daily support needs of individuals with hidden disabilities.

Key finding: In 23/24, Primary Practice participants' understanding of science and healthcare stayed constant (+0.33 percentage points). This was not statistically significant (p = 0.88, n = 35).

There was a slight difference between pupils who just attended the ASC and those who also attended the SuSc. Those who attended the SuSc stayed at the same level of understanding (-0.14 percentage points), and those who attended just the ASC also remained at a similar level of understanding (+ 1.25 percentage points).



Key finding: Pupils showed a nuanced understanding of healthcare and disability, with participants demonstrating the ability to identify various medical and neurodivergent conditions while showing genuine engagement with the topic.

The observational data shows a slightly more positive picture of pupils' understanding of science and health care. It shows that there was mixed level of pupils' understanding regarding healthcare and disability-related topics. Pupils showed strong engagement and personal connection when discussing hidden disabilities, actively sharing real-life experiences and stories. The pupils were able to identify various conditions including autism, PTSD,

ADHD, Tourette's, dyslexia, and dementia, suggesting some foundational knowledge of different medical conditions and neurodivergent conditions.

Key finding: Pupils comprehension was limited by a notable gap in understanding the practical implications and daily support needs of individuals with hidden disabilities, suggesting the need for more in-depth learning experiences.

However, there was room for development in their understanding of practical implications and support needs. Even confident pupils showed hesitation when asked to explain how to help people with invisible disabilities, and they struggled with classifying hidden versus visible disabilities. Their understanding of deaf people's daily challenges appeared limited, though they engaged enthusiastically with learning sign language, as demonstrated by their collaborative effort to decode the word 'Fortnite', the name of a popular video game, in sign language. One pupil stood out by showing insight into patient needs, suggesting varying levels of healthcare awareness within the group. The data suggests that while pupils have a basic awareness of various health conditions and disabilities, they may benefit from more exposure to practical understanding of support needs and daily living implications for people with different conditions.

In our interviews, parents reported various levels of impact on their children's understanding and interest in science and healthcare following the programme. While some children were noted to have already possessed enthusiasm for science, others showed new engagement through practical applications like physiology, anatomy, and healthcare procedures such as using slings. Parents had observed their children making real-world connections, such as linking stress to high blood pressure and applying their knowledge while watching healthcare programs.

> *"The random conversations we'll have about anatomy in a body and that understanding of the Physiology side of it, I'm like, OK, I didn't know you know that."*

The programme appears to have broadened pupils' understanding of healthcare professions and specific medical technologies like prosthetics and X-rays, while also providing valuable life skills not typically covered in standard school curricula. Some parents noted their children's enhanced recognition at secondary school for scientific aptitude.

> *"[The participant has] been picked out in school to attend science workshops."*

However, the impact wasn't universal - some parents reported that their children's interest in healthcare remained unchanged, and certain scientific concepts like kinetic energy, while understood, weren't necessarily attributed to the programme's influence.

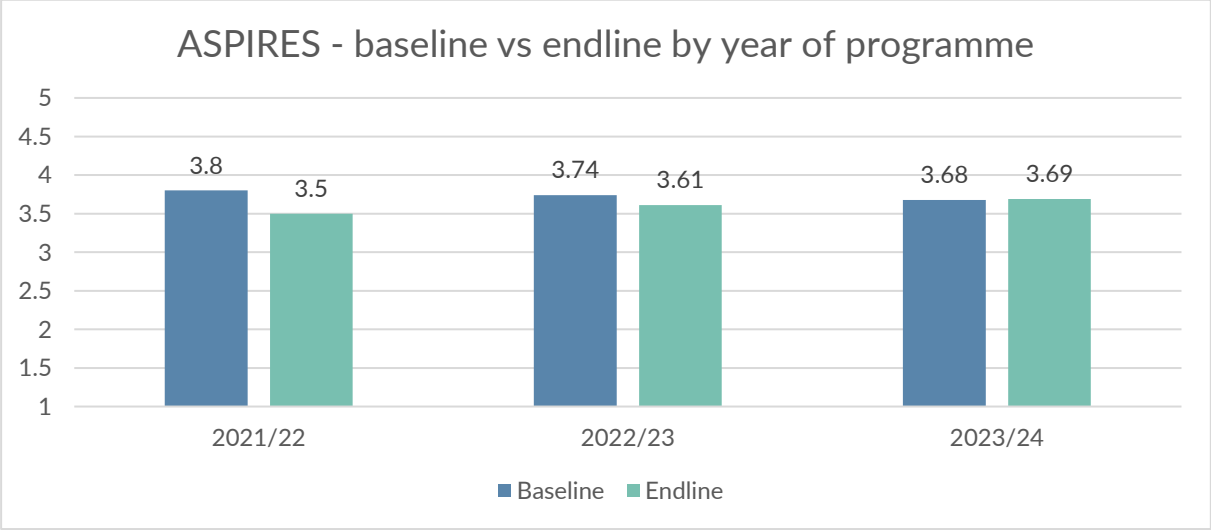
The student ambassadors observed a clear positive shift in pupils' engagement with science and healthcare careers throughout the program. They noted an overall increase in pupils' interest in these fields, with pupils explicitly expressing aspirations to pursue careers as scientists, doctors, or physiotherapists. Significantly, the ambassadors highlighted that beyond just developing these career aspirations, the pupils also demonstrated greater self-belief in their ability to achieve these professional goals. This suggests that the programme not only

enhanced pupils' interest in science and healthcare but also strengthened their sense of self-efficacy regarding these career paths.

> *"By the end a lot of kids said that they wanted to be like a scientist or a doctor and physiotherapist or. I think that was really positive impact [...] it gave them confidence that, yeah, I can do this in the future."*

Key finding: While pupils' understanding of science and healthcare remained the same in 2023/24, this represents an encouraging shift from the declining trends observed in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

This constant level of understanding, however, should be contextualised within the past couple of years of the programme. In both 2021/22 and 2022/23, participants saw a decrease in their understanding of the science and healthcare, whereas this year it remained the same. We should view it with measured optimism given the historical pattern of consistent decreases in previous years. This improved understanding of science and healthcare likely reflects changes made over the last two years, including adding doctors' talks, paramedic suite visits, and removing less relevant programme elements. Another possibility is that the 2021/22 survey had more questions overall, potentially causing pupils to experience survey fatigue and give less accurate answers. This means the lower scores might not truly reflect a meaningful difference.

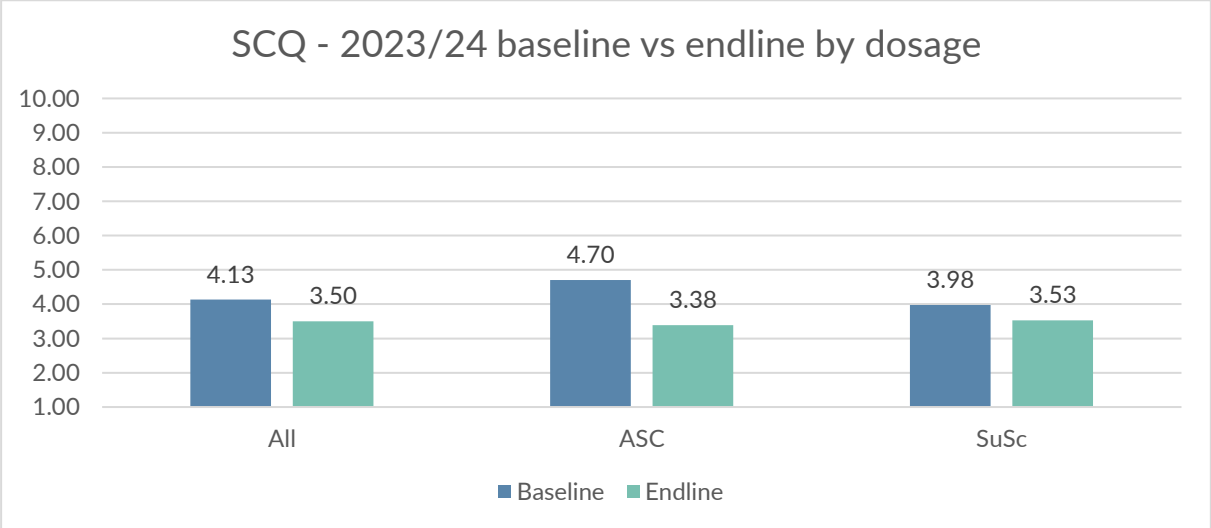


Transitioning to Secondary School Outcomes

The programme showed promising results across several areas, with statistically significant data indicating pupils had clearer expectations about secondary school life—supported by parent and student ambassador feedback about experiences like canteen use. While there was a reduction in school-related anxiety, this was less marked than in previous years. Another significant finding showed increased preparedness for secondary school, backed by observations and testimonials suggesting improved social confidence, teamwork and leadership skills.

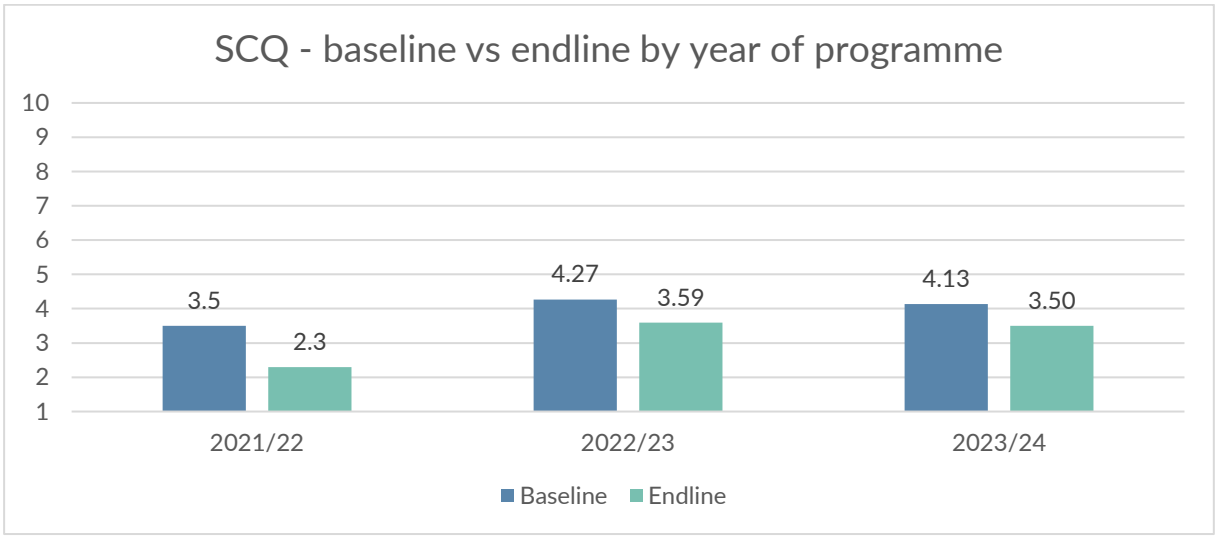
Key finding: In 23/24, Primary Practice participants experienced a decrease in worrying about secondary school (-7.04 percentage points.) This was not statistically significant (p = 0.05, n = 28).

By the programme's end, pupils reported feeling less anxious about starting secondary school, showing an increased sense of readiness. While this change fell just short of statistical significance, this trend is particularly noteworthy given the small sample size. Overall, participants' worries about going to school decreased by 7.04 percentage points. This was not statistically significant (p = 0.05, n = 28). The data shows that those who just participated in the ASC saw a larger decrease (-14.63 percentage point) than those who also attended the SuSc (-4.97 percentage points).

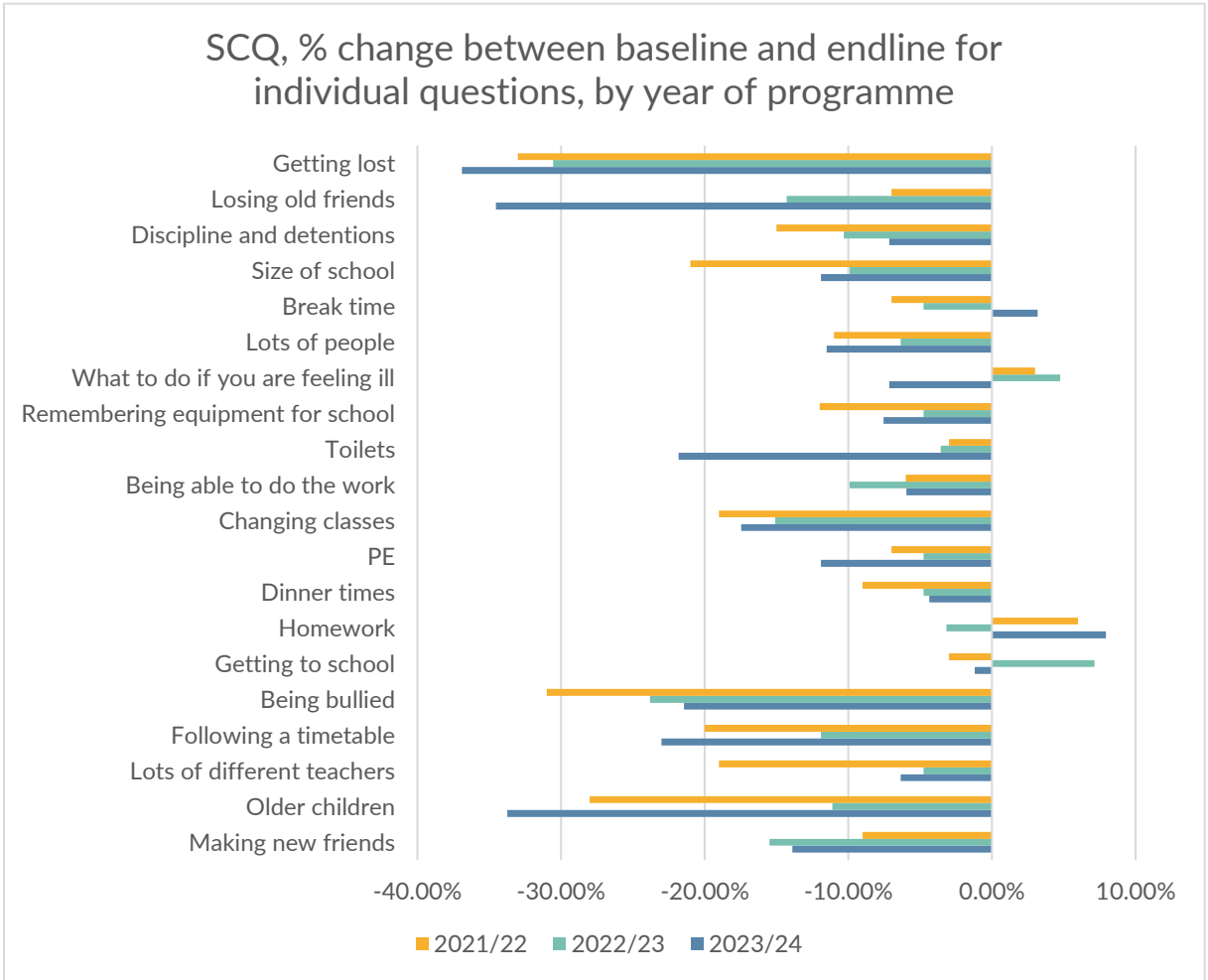


Key finding: Pupils worry decreased at a lesser rate in 23/24 than in previous years.

The rate at which pupils' worry is decreasing (-7.04 percentage points) is smaller than in 2021/22 (-13.33 percentage points) but similar to the rate of decrease in worry than last 2022/23 (-7.57 percentage points. This slowing down of anxiety reduction might be due to wider factors in society.



The analysis of individual survey questions reveals which aspects of secondary school transition concerned pupils more or less compared to previous Primary Practice programme cohorts. While we shouldn't overinterpret year-to-year variations, some notable patterns emerged. Pupils showed markedly reduced anxiety about practical matters such as navigation, maintaining friendships, health concerns, facilities, physical education, scheduling, and interactions with older students. However, they continued to express relatively more concern



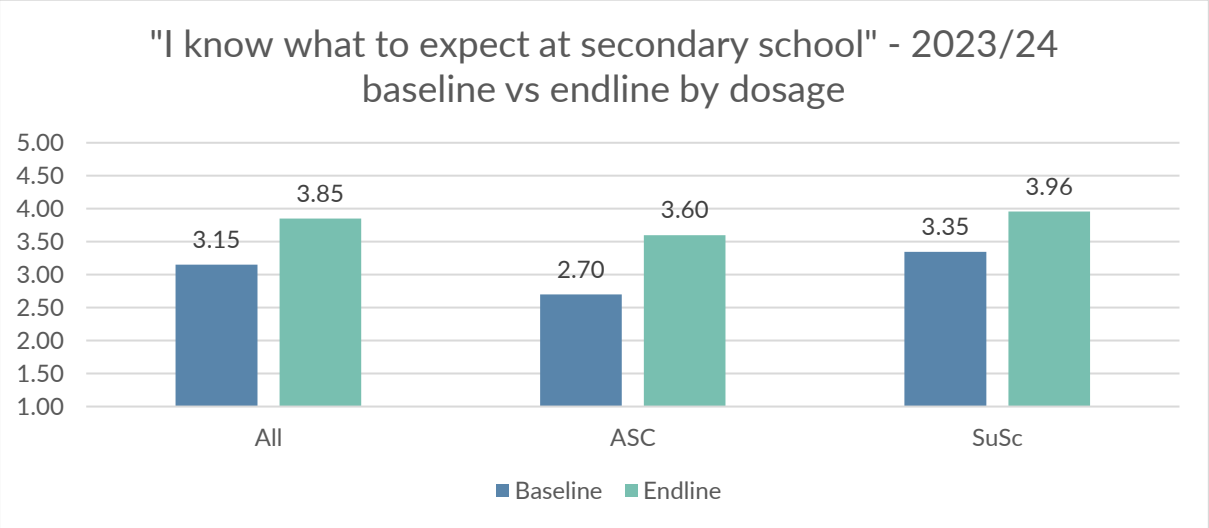
about behavioural expectations, social periods (break and lunch times), academic workload, and bullying.

Student ambassadors directly corroborated this decrease in anxiety in specific pupils:

> *"I remember in the beginning of the summer school he was like, oh, I'm a bit nervous when meeting new people. Then by the end, [...] he was, like, very confident or [not] scared at all about starting."*

Key finding: Pupils knew what to expect at secondary school (+17.42 percentage points) by the end of the programme. This was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, n = 33).

A similar pattern emerged in pupils' response to knowing what to expect at secondary school. Overall, pupils showed an increase in knowing what to expect at secondary school, with on average, their score increasing by 17.42 percentage points. This change was also statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, n = 33). Pupils who additionally attended the SuSc saw a smaller increase (+15.22 percentage points) than those pupils who just attended the after-school club (+22.50%). It should be noted, however, that those who additionally attended the SuSc, on average, had a higher endline score response to this statement.



Key finding: Student ambassadors observed pupils becoming increasingly confident in handling typical secondary school scenarios , such as going to the canteen and working in groups with new people.

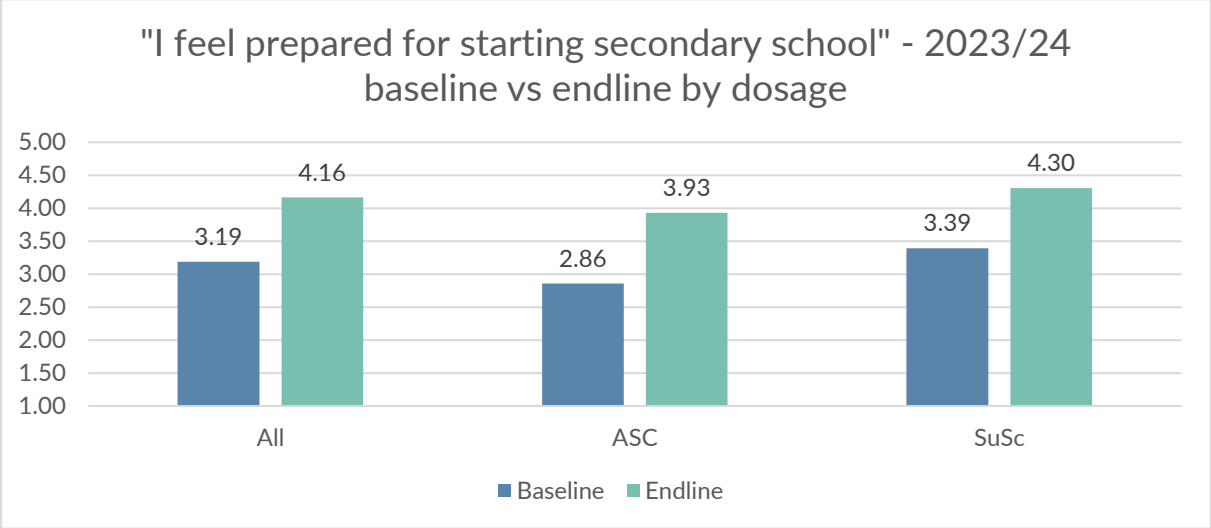
This was corroborated by student ambassadors who observed positive changes in pupils' preparedness for secondary school transition throughout the programme. The summer school component proved particularly effective, as it successfully replicated aspects of secondary school life including varied daily activities, managing timetables, and navigating lunch systems.

> *"I think the way they got lunch was really interesting and really good as well. I think because they got given a voucher and they would have to kind of go themselves, then choose like a healthy option and a variety of different things [...] like, that kind of is a skill that maybe [...] you might not have, but you will need to learn in secondary school."*

Student ambassadors also mentioned that the after-school club contributed to pupils knowing what to expect in secondary science by introducing topics that pupils would encounter when the officially started secondary school.

Key finding: The programme demonstrated success in boosting pupils' confidence about starting secondary school, with preparedness increasing by 24.32 percentage points. This substantial improvement was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, $n = 37$).

A key objective of the programme was to enhance pupils' readiness for secondary education, and the evaluation data demonstrated significant success. Pupils reported feeling markedly more prepared for secondary school, with overall readiness scores increasing by 24.32 percentage points ($p < 0.05$, $n = 37$). While pupils who attended only the after-school club showed a larger increase (+26.79%) compared to those who also participated in SuSc (+22.83%), it's noteworthy that SuSc participants achieved higher final readiness scores overall.



One of the reasons why pupils may have felt more prepared for starting secondary school is that they had developed the skills needed to succeed in secondary school.

Key finding: Pupils increased their social confidence, teamworking, and leadership skills.

Feedback from parents, student ambassadors, and from observational data, indicated that through the programme pupils developed their social confidence, particularly in their ability to work with new people from their school:

> *"It's been cemented a bit more, especially working with people that [the participant] doesn't know, because then going to secondary schools obviously showing that because [the participant] is meeting new people." – Parent*

The observational data showed students maintaining a comfortable classroom rapport, actively engaging with student ambassadors through knowledge sharing and questioning. A particularly compelling transformation was noted in initially quiet pupils, who developed into confident presenters by the programme's conclusion:

> *"With the one reserved kid and we could just see the growth in the six weeks that we did it. By the end she was speaking, she was participating, she was sharing her opinions with the group." – Student ambassador*

The regular peer interactions proved instrumental in this development, with even the most reserved students eventually finding their voice in class discussions. This growth in social assurance was further evidenced by pupils' ability to maintain effective collaboration even when faced with unfamiliar group members.

The programme's mixed-group approach to teamwork yielded largely positive results, with students showing strong dynamics in collaborative tasks like word-guessing activities and presentations. Whilst some pairs demonstrated excellent task-sharing abilities and others struggled with coordination, the overall environment remained supportive through peer reassurance. Working in mixed groups fostered both new friendships and essential collaborative skills.

Parents highlighted how scenario-based activities helped develop crucial leadership skills needed for secondary school.

> *"What I remember, and they had to kind of work together and navigate whatever scenarios. So I think that's shown through, you know, her report saying she's got directing skills, she's got leadership skill" - Parent*

Throughout the programme, students became more proactive in their learning, taking initiative in discussions and constructively challenging their peers' knowledge.

Key finding: There was limited evidence indicating whether pupils' resilience had increased.

Parent feedback provides an interesting counterpoint to these observations, highlighting the complex nature of confidence and resilience development. While parents generally acknowledged positive changes in their children's confidence levels, particularly through teamwork and validation from non-family members about academic abilities, at least one parent expressed concern about their child having excessive confidence but insufficient resilience.

> *"[The participant] needs more resilience and [] needs less confidence."*

This suggests a nuanced relationship between confidence and resilience that merits attention. Parents particularly valued the opportunity for their children to interact with new peers, indicating recognition of the social development benefits of the program. The positive response to team working activities reported by children to their parents aligns with the Student Ambassadors' observations of improved social interaction and classroom participation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Primary Practice programme has delivered encouraging results in 2023/24, marking a breakthrough in maintaining pupils' scientific understanding—a notable improvement from the

declining trends seen in previous years. Even more encouraging are the programme's achievements in secondary school preparation, where pupils have shown impressive gains in confidence and practical readiness, while our enhanced observational approach has yielded valuable insights into both strengths and areas for development in healthcare understanding. These findings not only validate the programme's core approach but signal an exciting trajectory for future development.

Recommended next steps

For the programme

- Introduce additional workshops specifically designed to address pupils' anxieties about secondary school transition, informed by baseline School Concerns Questionnaire results that highlight the cohort's primary concerns.

For the evaluation

- Maintain the current evaluation structure, continuing with surveys that measure pupils' scientific and healthcare understanding, secondary school transition concerns, and qualitative research to provide richer detail.
- Conduct a thorough review and redesign of the science knowledge assessment to better capture changes in understanding, ensuring age-appropriate questions that align with the programme's learning objectives.
- Investigate the less pronounced anxiety reduction observed this year through:
    - A literature review examining post-COVID anxiety trends in student populations
    - Targeted interviews with pupils and teachers to identify environmental or programme-specific factors
    - Implementation of an anxiety measure with national benchmarks for comparison
- Strengthen the evaluation methodology by implementing more structured observational tools to capture qualitative insights, particularly regarding scientific understanding and social skills development.
- Expand data collection to include observations during the summer school phase, where significant improvements in pupil confidence appear to occur.

Appendix

Full Questionnaires

Tool	Question Details
ASPIRES	Please answer the following questions by putting a tick in the box that you agree with or best describes you. 1: Strongly Disagree – to – 5: Strongly Agree • I would like to study more science in the future • I would like to become a scientist • I would like to have a job that uses science • I would like to work in science • I would like to work in science • I think I could be a good scientist one day • We learn interesting things in the science lessons at school • I look forward to my science lessons at school • Science lessons at school are exciting • Studying science in school is useful for getting a good job in the future • I do well in science • I find science difficult • I am just not good at science • I learn things quickly in my science lessons • Healthcare workers and people who work in science can make a difference in the world • Healthcare workers have exciting jobs
SCQ	We would like to ask you some questions about any concerns or worries you may have about your new secondary school. Please rate each of the following using the following scale: 1: Not at all worried – to – 10: I get extremely worried about it • Making new friends • Older children • Lots of different teachers • Following a timetable • Being bullied • Getting to school • Homework • Dinner times • PE • Changing classes • Being able to do the work • Toilets • Remembering equipment for school • What to do if you are feeling ill • Lots of people • Break time • Size of school • Discipline and detentions • Losing old friends • Getting lost

Supporting our purpose driven partners to make better decisions using high quality evidence.

Get in touch

hello@impacted.org.uk

www.evaluation.impactedgroup.uk

ImpactEd Evaluation

ImpactEd Group