

Laidlaw Scholars – Research Proposal 2026

Team Group 5 (Muskaan, Mollie, Jehoiady and Kelly)

Title Evaluating Teamwork, Adapting, Belonging, and School Engagement in Primary Education

Aim

- To explore how sports-related curricular enrichment impacts pupil attainment.
- To explore how different forms of curricular intervention are effective. (Comparison between Oxford and Sunderland Pilot)
- To discuss findings from quantitative and qualitative analysis in the context of wider curricular enrichment and programme design.

SDGs

- Good Health and Well-being
- Quality Education
- Reduced Inequalities

Objectives

- Assess the impact of curricular enrichment on teamwork, adaptability, engagement, belonging, and wellbeing.
- Analyse Oxford and Sunderland pilot data.
- Examine associations between pupil characteristics and developmental outcomes.
- Compare the two programme delivery models
- Explore challenges in measuring character and development.
- Contribute to debates on enrichment, inequality, and holistic development.
- Recommend improvements for future evaluation and research.

- Literature Review
 - Review research on curricular enrichment, pupil development, wellbeing, belonging, engagement, educational evaluation, and character.
 - Critically examine educational success and holistic pupil development.

Rationale (provide evidence/references approx. 500 words, minimum 5 references) - Muskaan

‘An unequal playing field’, a report published by the government in 2019, highlights the disparity in access to extracurricular activities amongst primary school children and its potential implications for indicators of shorter- and longer-term wellbeing and success: ability to form relationships, access to higher education, and accessibility of social mobility. In a response to identifying household income as the single biggest factor driving inequalities, the government initiated the rollout of bursary schemes aimed at enabling younger children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds to plug the opportunity gap. Ultimately, this highlights the breakdown of the traditional, and rather narrow, focus on academic achievement and invites consideration of softer skills as parameters of pupil attainment.

Reports published following recent studies have highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities in developing skills that are typically “neglected in the classroom” and their impact on pupil development. Nuffield Foundation’s investigation of such extracurricular enrichment amongst 5- and 7-year-old children pointed to greater achievement at the end of primary education, citing higher KS2 test results and, more notably, a positive correlation between engagement with extracurricular sport and overall pupil attainment.

These investigations prompt further probing: how extracurricular enrichment impacts students of different backgrounds and abilities, what kind of extracurricular interventions are most effective, how improvements in

performance indicators can be measured quantitatively, and the consideration of any disparities between data gathered from students and their teachers. This shapes the scope of our research proposal's aims, objectives and strategies.

Teamwork, belonging, adapting, and school engagement are identified as the key indicators of pupil attainment and are surveyed in the baseline and endline questionnaires following two curricular interventions in Oxford and Sunderland; they are rooted in crucial transferable skills such as communication and resilience which encourage a holistic approach to pupil development. Employing a wide range of parameters allows the impact of the extracurricular intervention to be assessed and discussed in greater depth.

The 6-digit code used to represent each pupil accounts for differences in abilities, gender and socioeconomic status, enabling quantitative data analysis on the impact of sports enrichment between both schools in a manner that can make it easier to deduce patterns and conclusions, particularly by holding variables constant. In doing so, the research also aims to highlight the potential challenges in conducting measurement of character skills and enable further discussion surrounding enrichment that may impact future program design and implementation.

References:

1. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/97503/html/>
2. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d307b8de5274a14e9f6bc20/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf
3. <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/news/out-of-school-activities-improve-childrens-educational-attainment>
4. <https://www.allisonacademy.com/students/self-improvement/importance-of-soft-skills-for-students/>
5. <https://www.oneworldeducation.org/our-students-writing/the-importance-of-soft-skills-in-school/>
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-achieving-and-thriving>

Research Methods:

Describe your research approach (Quant/Qual, Survey/Interview, Lit Review):

Quantitative:

- Data analysis using Python/R/Stata

What additional skills do you need to achieve this approach?

Quantitative:

- Coding skills to carry out statistical analysis and appropriate data visualisation (Stata, R, Python)

Qualitative:

- Ability to critically analyse secondary sources for the literature review
- Skills to devise effective survey and interview questions

General:

- Ability to integrate quantitative findings with wider educational policy and literature

Create a flow chart/visual map outlining your research strategy – Jay



