

## Enrichment in a longer school day

- Private schools still offer substantially more “enrichment” – after school clubs, sport, music, drama – than state schools.
- Enrichment is incredibly important. It helps students succeed later in life, and allows them to discover their passions. It is particularly important in secondary school, when pupils can cope with a longer school day.
- The majority of parents already offer extra-curricular activities for their children but a longer school day with more enrichment is important. Doing these activities in a longer day allows schools to offer these activities without compromising on the time needed for a core curriculum – especially maths, English, and science.

Longer school days, used effectively, can raise standards and help pupils succeed. Many of the earliest Academies have extended their school day – as have many of the most successful charter schools in the US (the American equivalent to our Academies and Free Schools). Earlier this year the Government gave a significant sum of extra funding to a quarter of secondary schools to allow them to offer a longer school day.

In particular, schools can help pupils by offering:

- Academic enrichment.
- Exposure to the arts and culture.
- Sport.

There are limits: more than nine hours intensive school a day does not seem to offer benefits and if a school is not teaching well then simply extending its hours will not help. Schools across the country should be extending the length of the day. This does not mean that teachers need to work longer hours – particularly for wider enrichment activities, which can be run by third parties.

### Helping parents

The vast majority of parents already take their children to extra-curricular activities and are prepared to go the extra mile to help their children.<sup>1</sup> Finances permitting, they will do whatever it takes. However, many parents need the school to support them and tell them what is most helpful.

Polling from Policy Exchange<sup>2</sup> found that:

- 38% of primary state schools offered a longer day, compared with 81% of private primaries. In both cases the longer days were usually voluntary for parents.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sutton Trust: 76% of parents involve their children in extra-curricular activities

<http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/enrichment-brief/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/only%20a%20matter%20of%20time.pdf>

- At secondary, 38% of state schools and 72% of private schools offered a longer school day. Private schools were much more likely to make a longer day mandatory at secondary schools; parents are also more likely to back a mandatory longer day at secondary.
- 25% of parents would like to use a longer school day but do not have access to it. Only 9% of parents have access to a longer school day and do not use it.
- Parents would overwhelmingly like longer school days to be used for enrichment, sport, and homework support. At secondary school, the most popular reason for a longer school day was “improving academic knowledge and skills”.

### Academic enrichment

The Education Endowment Fund (EEF), which has done the most comprehensive summary of evidence in education in the country, found that pupils can make an additional two months of progress a year by extending school time. In particular the EEF found that schools should use extra time to:

- Explore topics that link to the curriculum and encourage further reading for pleasure.
- Offer small group or 1:1 help.
- Help students with homework.

### Arts and culture

While academic support after school can be important, it is also vital that schools take the opportunity to expose students to great thinkers, artists, composers, and creators. We believe that the Ebacc – rigorous, academic GCSE subjects that private schools teach pupils, and that state schools are increasingly offering – are vital for pupils’ future. But this makes it even more important that extra-curricular time is used for wider pursuits. This is for four reasons:<sup>3</sup>

- It can help them do well academically. A major study by the Sutton Trust found that bright students who were taken to museums and other educational outings and who read for pleasure were more likely to do well at GCSE. The University UCL found that pupils offered extra-curricular activities did better in primary school. Schools should offer a solid foundation of knowledge in the classroom and then build on this knowledge through extra-curricular activity.
- It allows them to discover new passions. The more ideas and areas we expose students to, the more likely it is that they will discover what they love and wish to do as adults. The wonderful thing about the arts, music, and culture is that it can be enjoyed as a professional, as an amateur, and as someone who just loves to experience new things.
- It helps students navigate the adult world. The Social Mobility Commission, which looks at how to improve the chances of people from less wealthy backgrounds, has emphasised the need for “cultural capital”. This is the knowledge, experiences, and information that highly educated families take for granted and that private schools provide. This includes understanding our, and other countries’, cultural and artistic heritage.

---

<sup>3</sup> Please see our notes on Knowledge and Testing in schools

- It broadens their knowledge. In another note, we explain the importance of a broad knowledge-based curriculum. Cultural and arts enrichment provides another opportunity to give students a broad base of knowledge.

### Sport

A number of studies have shown that sport not only makes children healthier but can improve attendance and behaviour. It also, like arts and cultural enrichment, helps students discover their passions.

The vast majority of schools already offer a range of sport activities during and after school. The risk is that the other areas of enrichment, discussed above, get ignored. Sport is important, but not exclusively.

### Self Discipline and Character

One of the major discoveries in recent decades is the importance of character, or grit, in success. People who believe that hard work and persistence will help them improve, and are able to cope with initial failures, do better at school and in adult life.

Extra curricular activities are superb at inculcating a growth mindset. Becoming a musician, or proficient sportsperson, requires consistent hard work, determination, and an ability to cope with setbacks.