

“Schools can
put disengaged
learners back in
the driving seat...”

PUPIL POWER

Ian Wybron
Ally Paget

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First published in 2016
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*Unit 1, Lloyds Wharf, 2–3 Mill Street,
London, SE1 2DB, UK*

ISBN 978-1-909037-99-1
Series design by modernactivity
Typeset by Chat Noir Design, Charente

Set in Gotham Rounded
and Baskerville 10
Cover paper: Flora Gardenia
Text paper: Munken Premium White



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Acknowledgements

First and foremost we would like to thank the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for their generous support of this project, without which the pilot would not have been possible. In particular we would like to thank Louise Palomino and Sarah Beckett from the PHF for their support and feedback during the research.

We would like to thank Tricia Nicoll for her invaluable advice on putting coproduction into practice in the early stages of the pilot. This included help in designing and delivering training sessions for school staff and students. We are also grateful to TeachFirst for assistance with recruiting participating schools.

We owe a huge thanks to all of the school staff involved in delivering Pupil Power. This includes participating staff who worked tirelessly to make the project a success; and a large number of other school staff working behind the scenes – managing and supporting the delivery of the pilot, administering surveys, and passing relevant data to Demos researchers for the evaluation. We would of course also like to thank the many participating students who kept us inspired over the two years with their achievements.

We have also benefited a great deal from the expertise of representatives from a range of education and youth organisations that were invited to discuss our interim findings at a roundtable in July 2014. Particular thanks are due to Lucie Stephens of the New Economics Foundation, and Cerise Abel-Thompson of Learn to Lead, who gave presentations.

This report would not have been possible without the help and support of our excellent colleagues at Demos. We would like to thank Claudia Wood, who first proposed the pilot and supported us throughout. We are also grateful to many colleagues and interns for their research support over the two years, including Abby Smith, Sarah Stopforth, Marco Bartholdy, Mansor Rezaian, Shada Yousef, Laila Ezz, Heather Vernon, Phillip Bray, and Theo Bass. We would also like to thank Laura Kent, Megan Poole and Sophie Gaston for their work guiding the report through the publication and dissemination process. Any errors and omissions are the authors' own.

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January 2016

Executive summary

Over the two academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15, Demos worked with four secondary schools across England to test the potential of ‘coproduction’ as a means of tackling educational disengagement.

This report presents the findings of our evaluation of the pilot, known to schools as Pupil Power. The report covers both our ‘impact’ findings – measurable changes seen in the pupils and staff who participated, and any wider impacts in the four schools – and also ‘process’ findings, relating to how successfully the pilot was implemented and the lessons for other practitioners interested in the approach.

Educational disengagement

Disengagement is a persistent and pervasive issue in education. One study has shown that almost half (45 per cent) of pupils have become disengaged from school by the time they sit their GCSEs.¹

Some of the short-term effects of disengagement can be seen clearly: in poor behaviour, truanting and academic under-performance. National statistics show that across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in England there were on average around 26 permanent exclusions per day in 2013/14, and 1,420 fixed period exclusions – most commonly for persistent disruptive behaviour.² Other statistics suggest that as many as 12 million school days are lost each year to unauthorised absences.³ And each year around three in ten pupils getting their GCSE results have – for one reason or another – not made expected progress in English since they started secondary school; a third have not done so in maths.⁴ Students who are disengaged are disproportionately likely to contribute to these troubling statistics.

The longer-term consequences of disengagement are also clear: wasted talent, poor employment outcomes, greater prevalence of risky and harmful behaviours, and so on. Currently more than one in ten 16–24-year-olds are NEET (not in employment, education or training), not only shutting doors to those individuals, but also harming the wider economy.⁵

A particular kind of solution: coproduction

In this pilot we sought to introduce a new way of working with disengaged pupils – ‘coproduction’ – to try to break the cycle of disengagement. The causes of disengagement are, of course, multiple and complex. We chose a particular phase in the educational journey to intervene – key stage 3 – seen as a critical window to prevent disengagement.

Coproduction describes a particular way of conceptualising public services. It seeks to reframe the traditional provider–service-user relationship, recasting traditional ‘recipients’ of services as active partners in their design and delivery.

We chose to test coproduction in education because the evidence from health and social care settings – where coproduction is most developed – suggests this type of approach can help to achieve better outcomes, and has successfully re-engaged those who have disengaged from their care or treatment. While there are examples of coproduction in education, it is under-explored in schools in England, and particularly so in the context of disengagement where it may have the most impact.

Our intention throughout this pilot was to put disengaged students back in the driving seat, giving them new opportunities – working in partnership with teachers and school staff – to set their own learning goals and to undertake projects outside lessons in order to make positive changes to the school environment.

Four key principles

While coproduction is related to ‘student voice’ initiatives already going on in schools, it is more than just listening to what pupils think. It provides a conceptual framework for how to treat pupils in school and how to provide more empowering opportunities.

Our approach has been informed by four key principles, first developed by social reformer and innovator Edgar Cahn:

- *To treat people as assets*: Disengaged students should not be, or feel, defined by their disengagement; they should feel that people are interested in their talents and ideas and how these can be used for the benefit of the school community.
- *To redefine work*: Success at school is not just about grades, but rather all effort to make the school community a better place for learning. Where poor academic outcomes drive disengagement it is important to bring forward other things that are of value.
- *To promote reciprocity*: This involves a big shift in expectations: disengaged students take on responsibilities for doing things for other students, even staff – things that might formerly have been assumed to be the responsibility of staff.
- *To build social networks*: Using relationships and networks beyond the classroom, and fostering new ones, are vital activities for enriching learning and opening up opportunities.

The fidelity to these four key principles has been one of the ways in which we have judged the success of the pilot, and we return to them below.

Pilot set-up

Four schools were recruited from across the country to take part in the pilot, with the assistance of TeachFirst. The schools were:

- John Whitgift Academy, in Grimsby
- Greenwood Academy, in Birmingham
- Firth Park Academy, in Sheffield
- Eastlea Community School, in the London Borough of Newham

The four schools vary significantly in size and pupil characteristics, providing very different contexts for conducting the pilot. All four have above the national average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM).

Over the two years, 64 pupils participated in Pupil Power, making it necessarily a small, experimental pilot – a pathfinder from which we intended to develop lessons and good practice principles. In each school, four year 7 students and four year 9 students were selected to take part in each pilot year. Schools were asked to select students who were either already disengaged or at risk of becoming so – showing signs of academic underperformance or challenging behaviour, or missing lessons.

Two school staff were responsible for delivering the pilot at each school at any one time. In total, 15 teaching and non-teaching staff had been involved in delivery by the end of the pilot.

At the beginning of each pilot year, Demos researchers and a coproduction consultant delivered staff training and a pupil briefing, details of which are in the main text.

Intervention

Participating staff were asked to meet students for weekly coproduction sessions. Schools were given considerable flexibility over what these sessions looked like, but we encouraged and saw two main approaches. Most common were group-led projects, where pupils worked together to identify an issue or problem in the school and then designed and implemented a solution to it. The second approach was to hold one-to-one sessions, where students set their own personal learning goals and targets with staff. Both types of session were intended as regular spaces for pupils to ‘be in charge’, with staff acting in a facilitation role, drawing out the students’ strengths and interests.

Evaluation design

As explained, our evaluation sought to measure the impact of the pilot (measured in outcomes for students, staff and school), and

to explore key success factors and challenges in the process of implementing it.

To meet our evaluation aims, we used the following research methods:

- collection and analysis of school data to measure ‘hard’ outcomes for students – data on attainment, attendance, punctuality and behaviour
- baseline and post-intervention surveys of participating students, designed to capture changes in motivation and self-esteem
- baseline and post-intervention surveys of subject teachers, designed to capture changes in the motivation and work ethic of pupils
- coproduction session observation (ethnography)
- interviews with participating students at the end of each pilot year
- interviews with participating school staff at the end of each pilot year
- interviews with school senior leaders

Alongside measuring changes in the participant group, we asked schools to recruit a comparison group of students to try to help isolate the independent impact of the intervention. While the comparison group was broadly similar to the participant group in its members’ characteristics, baseline surveys revealed substantial differences in attitudes to school and therefore it is of limited use as a comparison.

The main text explains how each component of quantitative data presented its own challenges and should be interpreted carefully. We bring to the foreground the qualitative findings, which are necessarily important for understanding the impact of this small explorative study.

Baseline data

Several pupil characteristics – for example, eligibility for FSM, having a special educational need, or low prior attainment – are known to be risk factors for disengagement. Data gathered from

schools at baseline showed the following about pupils who participated over the two pilot years:

- *Gender*: 73 per cent were male and 27 per cent female.
- *Ethnicity*: 76 per cent were White British; 24 per cent were minority ethnic pupils.
- *Deprivation*: 41 per cent were eligible for FSM, while 78 per cent had been eligible for them within the last six years (compared with 16 per cent and 29 per cent of all secondary pupils nationally).
- *Special educational needs (SEN)*: 33 per cent received some form of support for SEN (compared with 18 per cent nationally).
- *English as an additional language (EAL)*: 13 per cent had EAL (compared to 14 per cent nationally).
- *Prior attainment band*: 27 per cent had low prior attainment at the end of primary school (compared with around 21 per cent nationally), 66 per cent were in the middle prior attainment band, and 8 per cent had high prior attainment.

Contrary to expectations, baseline surveys showed that the majority of students (72 per cent) said they liked being at school, and scored positively on other motivation items, raising questions about whether the right students were selected for the project. However, a small majority (53 per cent) were considered by teachers to have behavioural issues, while more than three-quarters (77 per cent) were thought to be underachieving.

What pupils did

It is important to note that there was a spectrum of participation among targeted students. In practice, it was most often a smaller, 'core' group of regular attendees who were the driving force behind the group-led projects.

Some of the group-led projects are described below.

A lunchtime sports club in Grimsby

Students in Grimsby identified a lack of lunchtime activities as a cause of boredom and disruptive behaviour. They put the case for a lunchtime football club to the head of PE, who agreed. The students were involved in all aspects of setting up and running the club; they approached staff who might be willing to supervise it, ensured equipment was available, and advertised it around the school. They also dealt with problems collectively as they arose – for example, deciding how to deal with older students who caused disruption, and discussing how to ensure that girls were involved as well as boys.

Launching a petition to change school uniform, Newham

Students voted on things they wanted to change in school. They decided to campaign to change the school uniform, and the member of staff working with them supported them to design a petition, which they circulated around school at break and lunchtime. Unfortunately, the school senior leadership team did not allow student petitions at the school without their permission. The students were disappointed, but met members of the team who offered feedback on what changes they would be more or less receptive to.

Tidying and replanting a school garden, Birmingham

In Birmingham, students raised funds to replant a neglected garden on the school site. They brainstormed ways to raise money, and decided to run a tombola, which they advertised around school. Participating staff accompanied the students on a trip to source plants, and students kept a running total of how much they had left to spend. Students showed Demos researchers ‘before’ and ‘after’ shots showing the completed garden.

Supporting Tour de France celebrations, Sheffield

The school in Sheffield was on the route of the 2014 Tour de France. Having encountered difficulties in arranging meetings

staff participants saw the whole-school celebrations as a welcome opportunity for the Pupil Power students to be involved. Students were given a choice over how to be involved (eg making things and creating displays), and were encouraged to divide up tasks as a group.

In addition to group work, almost all participating students discussed their personal goals with staff. The focus of these one-to-one sessions tended to be on behaviour, and on individual barriers to engaging in particular lessons. Staff helped students to make changes such as:

- changing a seating plan so it was no longer in register order
- making history lessons more interactive
- being able to wear shoes, rather than trainers, to school
- completing homework more frequently
- designing a practical experiment for a science lesson

Student and staff impressions

A staff participant told us:

I think the best thing about the project is that what you're basically saying to these students [is] that we're interested in what you've got to say – you've got useful things to say and important things to say and we're going to listen to them.

Those students whose involvement in the pilot was regular and maintained throughout the year were enthusiastic about Pupil Power in interviews, appreciating the element of choice, the ability to speak freely, and the opportunity to draw on their personal talents.

Some of the challenges with the approach identified by students included not being allowed to progress with an idea because of school processes, and having focused too much on individual behaviour rather than spoken about wider things in school.

While considered hard work by staff – especially in scheduling and getting some students to show up – the majority

understood and saw the value of coproduction, and felt that the logic of using the approach to tackle disengagement was right. However, some staff felt that they had had to compromise on some of the principles of coproduction in the interests of getting things done (discussed further below).

Findings: impact

Below we summarise the findings of our impact evaluation for pupils, staff and the wider school. Under each heading we provide a snapshot finding in *italic*.

It is important to note that the percentages discussed below are each for a sample of approximately 64 pupils – and combine pupils from both pilot years. Therefore fairly substantial percentage point changes can indicate relatively minor actual changes.

Pupils

Impact was mixed for participating pupils. In part this can be explained by the different levels of participation, while many of our research methods measured impact at the whole-group level. For those who did engage with the pilot, the clearest impacts were seen in improved behaviour, confidence and soft skills, and in their relationships with teachers.

Attainment

Academic progress was small for most participants over the period of intervention, and impact on academic outcomes hard to quantify or to attribute to participation in the pilot.

The period over which we were measuring academic outcomes was very short, limiting the scope for measuring substantial academic progress.

Only small progress was made by the majority of participating pupils over the course of the year in teacher assessments: 73 per cent had made progress in English, 53 per cent in maths, and 70 per cent in science. There was no

appreciable difference between the outcomes of the participant group and the comparison group.

Surveys found a small increase in the proportion of participating pupils considered to be achieving their potential by teachers (from 19 per cent to 25 per cent of pupils, an increase of six percentage points); but a decrease in the proportion of pupils themselves who thought they were (from 79 per cent to 70 per cent, a decrease of nine percentage points).

In interviews, staff participants felt that the impact on academic outcomes was hard to quantify or to attribute to participation in the pilot. This was especially so for students who were involved in other schemes or supported in other ways that could also explain any progress made. However, one staff participant felt that the pilot had addressed students' 'softer skills' (see below), and that this in itself could have encouraged more academic progress. Another felt particular students were taking more 'responsibility' for their learning through having participated in Pupil Power.

Behaviour

There were some very positive changes in individual students' behaviour, which were attributed by staff to the pilot, but no improvement in behaviour among other pupils.

Participants had a great variety of behaviour records over the course of the pilot year. Some pupils' behaviour acted as a barrier to participation in the project. However, we heard some very positive anecdotes about changes in other participants' behaviour. In one case, staff felt the pilot had helped to avoid an exclusion.

Staff participants reported that individual students had not only improved their own behaviour but had the potential to be a positive influence on others. Some staff reported that students were 'taking charge' or 'taking ownership' of their behaviour since participating in the pilot. Often, the examples cited in interviews were small but staff thought they were significant (sometimes they identified a change in attitude that may pre-empt a more substantial change in behaviour).

Data we gathered from schools to measure changes in termly behaviour incidents showed a mixed picture for all pupils. The behaviour of almost half (45 per cent) improved over the course of the intervention, while it deteriorated for three in ten (30 per cent). In surveys, the proportion of pupils who said they get into trouble at school often or always decreased from 37 per cent to 26 per cent (by 11 percentage points), while the proportion considered disruptive in class by teachers decreased from 53 per cent to 51 per cent (by two percentage points). There were fewer positive changes in the comparison group but members had been better behaved at baseline.

Attendance

The majority of students did not have many unauthorised absences during the intervention.

The vast majority of participants were not frequently truants – though the data suggest that a small number may have sometimes been absent from school without authorisation. Almost a third (31 per cent) of participants had no unauthorised absences during the year in which they participated, while 5 per cent of participants missed more than 15 per cent of sessions through unauthorised absences.

The termly unauthorised absences showed that attendance levels of 13 per cent of participants improved over the year, but that of 46 per cent worsened. One school told us to expect a higher rate of term-on-term unauthorised absences, as rates rise in the summer term – and this was also the case in the comparison group.

Outcomes on punctuality were mixed.

Data showed that six in ten participants (60 per cent) were late to ten or more morning or afternoon registrations over the relevant pilot year, while only 4 per cent were not late to any of them. During the intervention, the number of late registrations between the autumn and summer terms improved for 44 per cent of participants, while that of 37 per cent worsened. Less positive

change was seen in the comparison group, but those in the comparison group were generally more punctual than the participants in our study.

Self-esteem

Student surveys showed high levels of self-esteem at baseline, which reduced slightly over the course of the intervention, as it did in our comparison group.

While a range of positive changes emerged in our interviews about some participants' confidence (see below), our surveys of all participants found small negative changes (to no change) on the majority of self-esteem measures over the course of the pilot, from strong baseline positions. For example, the proportion of selected pupils saying they are basically happy with who they are decreased from 92 per cent of pupils to 88 per cent (four percentage points). There were similar results in the comparison group.

Motivation in school

Several participants were very motivated by the pilot, though it is unclear how this related to motivation in school in general.

Some staff believed that the mere fact of having been selected to take part in something was motivating for the pupils who engaged. Staff participants felt that the pilot had been motivating because it had given students a sense of 'value' in the school community – a sense that people were interested in what they thought and were capable of contributing to the school. Conversely, while being listened to was motivating for students, not being listened to was demotivating.

While several of the participating pupils were motivated by the projects they were undertaking, it is not clear to what extent the pilot had an effect on motivation in general at school – for example, the extent to which pupils liked being at school, and were interested in lessons.

As stated above, survey data showed that, contrary to expectations, the majority of participants scored positively on motivation measures at baseline. In this context, motivation in

school for participants – and also the comparison group – actually decreased on the majority of measures over the relevant pilot year. For example, the proportion of selected pupils who said they like being at school decreased from 72 per cent to 61 per cent (11 percentage points)

Interestingly, the teacher surveys showed teachers had a slightly more positive view of participants' motivation. For example, the proportion of pupils they thought to be easily motivated increased from 36 per cent to 43 per cent (eight percentage points).

Confidence and soft skills

The pilot appears to have had a significant impact on the confidence and soft skills of individual students.

Several students we interviewed spoke about being more 'involved' or 'more active' in school because of the pilot. The words 'confidence' and 'skills' were mentioned several times, and many said they were having more interactions with people than previously. Several participants enjoyed working in a team and with new people, and being more visible in the school. Some students identified in particular that their ability to communicate ideas and feelings and other soft skills had improved. Others were taking on additional responsibilities in the school since participating in the pilot – for example, one pupil had signed up to help with the school's transitions programme for new primary school pupils.

While staff participants felt the pilot's impact depended on the student in question, they too reported a fairly wide range of positive impacts for those students who engaged with the project, including in their confidence and independence. Staff described individual students as, variously, 'more mature', 'more engaged', 'more focused' and more capable of 'independent thought'.

Staff-student relationships

In many cases relationships between staff and students improved through coproduction.

Interviews with staff and student participants revealed several examples of relationships established or improved between staff and students through coproduction. The pilot offered all participants the opportunity to be seen differently, challenging unhelpful fixed roles of ‘strict teacher’, ‘naughty student’.

Students and staff both reflected on how the pilot had helped develop ‘trust’. One student, for example, talked about feeling more ‘relaxed’ with staff, while staff spoke about students being more ‘open’ and being able to build greater rapport with them. More generally staff felt that the pilot was beneficial insofar as it gave new opportunities for positive interactions outside lessons.

Our student and staff surveys found that for all selected pupils there were small (to no) changes on measures of positive student–staff relationships. Most notably the proportion of students who felt they get on well with teachers often or always increased from 43 per cent of participants to 53 per cent (by nine percentage points).

Staff

The pilot was very demanding on staff time and workload.

Participating in the pilot placed significant demands on staff in scheduling meetings, supporting student projects, and helping Demos researchers with data. A range of ‘process’ challenges identified by staff are outlined in more detail below. The pressures of administrating the pilot applied to staff participants with and without teaching responsibilities, and the situation was generally the same, or not improved, in the second year.

Staff identified benefits of coproduction in terms of professional development and relationships with students.

The large majority of staff – including those who found participation the most difficult – were convinced of the value of the pilot. They reported personal outcomes such as greater

‘awareness and responsiveness to pupils’, and developing new skills in mentoring and coaching. Other staff identified different skills that they had developed through helping students to undertake projects in school – including junior staff having more contact and negotiations with senior staff.

The wider school

Staff and students reported limited whole-school awareness of the pilot.

Staff participants in all four schools reported that the pilot had had limited impact, or none at all, at the whole-school level. Occasionally, projects that students were completing as part of Pupil Power were visible around the school – as, for example, the gardening project at the school in Birmingham – which raised awareness. But this tended to be the extent of the project’s impact.

Although one staff participant questioned whether the lack of whole-school impact mattered, in the main, staff and student participants reported that they would have preferred more involvement from people and awareness across the school.

Process

This project was a small scale exploratory study, and part of our work was to establish what was possible within the constraints of the systems in place in participating schools.

Below we outline the key lessons from the formative part of the evaluation.

Schools provided very different operating contexts for the pilot – some more, and some less, conducive to coproduction.

Each set of circumstances brought its own challenges. One challenge related to how the pilot fitted within broader school cultures. At one school, for example, staff explained that there was no ethos of after-school or extracurricular activities, while in other schools extracurricular interventions were very much

secondary to more curriculum-based interventions. This was reflected in the planning and support put in place for Pupil Power.

The aspect of process that was of greatest concern to staff was the selection of students, in particular the level of disengagement.

Staff at different schools, and even within the same school, had starkly divided opinions on how disengaged participating students should be. Some staff felt that the right students had been chosen – because ‘no one ever tries with them’. Other staff argued in favour of a different selection of students, saying that the pupils were ‘maybe too far past’ an intervention like Pupil Power. They suggested more time and effort could have been spent in identifying pupils who would really engage and benefit from the project (particularly new year 7s) – perhaps involving pupils who, because of their popularity, would be able to motivate other pupils.

Three factors informed staff selection that also affected the success of the pilot: time and availability, seniority and prior relationships with students.

- *Time and availability:* Non-teaching staff generally had more availability and flexibility than teaching staff.
- *Seniority:* When required, teaching staff generally found it easier than non-teaching staff to negotiate with senior staff when supporting students to action their chosen projects.
- *Relationship with students:* In general relationships were more easily established with non-teaching staff – perhaps because it was difficult for students to overcome established attitudes towards those with a teaching role.

Some staff felt the pilot lacked the positive supporting structure needed within their school.

Some staff reported that they had not felt especially well supported within school to implement the pilot. One staff

participant suggested there should be a more senior staff member involved in the delivery, while another suggested that ‘pilot coordinator’ should have been a named job role.

Barriers to implementing coproduction were overwhelmingly practical – in particular the scheduling of sessions.

Scheduling coproduction sessions posed a challenge in all four schools. This was because of staff and student timetables – and particularly where student participants were already subject to a number of interventions. In some schools, relying on students to remember that they had a session was a significant difficulty.

The question of whether sessions should take place during or outside lesson time was a fraught one. We heard concerns expressed by senior staff that missing lessons could be ‘counterproductive’ to learning. However, other staff suggested that so long as the same lessons were not being missed each week, a positive space such as that provided by Pupil Power could be beneficial to learning and that, furthermore, ‘taking time’ from students would feel punitive. A happier medium was found where projects gathered momentum and students became more willing to give up their own time.

Group-led sessions were a more popular approach to implementing coproduction, but both group sessions and one-to-one sessions had benefits and challenges.

Opportunities for team-working was identified as a benefit by both students and staff in the group sessions, but we found that group sessions presented challenges for behaviour management. Staff told us about the importance of building a good working dynamic, and suggested they should have concentrated more on team-building to start with.

One-to-one sessions could be a very positive space for pupils to decide personal goals. However, some of these sessions which focused more squarely on grades and behaviour slipped into sometimes feeling punitive.

Fidelity to coproduction

In order to draw conclusions about how useful coproduction is as a tool for tackling disengagement, it is important to understand how well it was realised in this project. Different staff felt they had been more or less true to the four key coproduction principles outlined above. We return to those principles here.

People are assets

This was perhaps the best realised of the four principles. Students who benefited from Pupil Power did more than tell staff that they were unhappy about certain things in school; staff acted as facilitators for students to take action on problems they identified, using their strengths and interests.

Valuing work differently

Where best realised, project-based sessions offered an opportunity for pupils to focus on, and be recognised for, non-academic achievements in school. Perhaps one of the most encouraging findings from our interviews with students and staff was that students felt a higher sense of 'value' in the school community. Sessions became more fraught when the focus was on falling behind academically.

Reciprocity

Students who benefited from Pupil Power did take on new responsibilities in school, including doing things for other pupils and the wider school community, which might ordinarily have fallen to school staff to do. However, reciprocity was the principle over which there was most slippage following good starting intentions, with staff members themselves admitting to doing things that they thought pupils could have done.

Building social networks

Pupils who engaged noted that team-working was an aspect of social networking they particularly enjoyed. Insofar as projects

connected pupils to different people in the school community, networks were improved. However, participating staff thought that the use of wider networks beyond the school – for example local businesses – to create opportunities for students could have been improved.

Conclusion: coproduction as a tool for tackling disengagement

Participating in the Pupil Power pilot was a very positive experience for a small number of students who were enthused by the approach. Students designed and delivered a range of projects in their schools, and were actively engaged by staff in setting their own learning goals. In some cases, pupils recognised as disengaged and challenging thrived on the opportunities provided, and were seen in a new light by school staff – as more responsible and mature, even leaders.

However, many other participating pupils did not engage nor benefit in the same way. As a result, the picture painted by the school and survey data is one of the project having a fairly insignificant impact. In answering the question ‘is coproduction a useful tool for tackling disengagement?’, the answer from this pilot can only be: it depends.

This study was a small scale pathfinder, rather than a large scale pilot to test a fully formed process. As stated above, a large part of our work was to identify success factors – through formative evaluation – for implementing coproduction within a secondary school setting. Our study has shown that there is potential for coproduction to tackle educational disengagement. Ultimately, a larger study, building on what we have done, with a bigger sample of students and schools, would be beneficial for building a clearer picture of the positive, small scale impacts we have seen.

Introduction

This report presents the findings from a two-year pilot that explored the potential for coproduction to address educational disengagement among secondary school students.

Despite there being extensive research into the causes, manifestations and effects of disengagement, and successive policy and practice efforts aimed at tackling it, disengagement remains an intractable and costly challenge for UK schools. Funding pressures have led the education system to prioritise interventions targeted at vulnerable student groups that are more clearly defined, and where outcomes are more easily measured and communicated: children who fall behind in literacy, those with SEN and disabilities, and those in receipt of FSM. Our own findings suggest there is a substantial crossover between these groups and disengaged students, but not complete identity; some of the students chosen to take part in our pilot were ‘coasting’, falling short of their potential but not subject to other interventions in school.

There remains a need for a solution applicable to the wider cohort of disengaged students. To that end, this pilot has looked to potential lessons from health and social care, where the ethos of coproduction – fundamentally changing the relationship between the provider and the user of a service – has already proven effective.

Educational disengagement

Disengagement from learning is a persistent and pervasive problem for educational policy and practice. It has wide-ranging and long-lasting impacts, not only on the later life chances of the young people affected, but also, ultimately, on the structure of the UK economy.

In the short term, disengagement from education is associated with poorer levels of attainment, attendance and behaviour at school. Each year around three in ten students getting their GCSE results have not made the expected progress in English since they started secondary school, while a third have not done so in maths.⁶ According to national statistics, across all state-funded schools in England in 2013/14 there were on average around 26 permanent exclusions and 1,420 fixed period exclusions per day – most commonly as a result of persistent disruptive behaviour.⁷ As many as 12 million school days are lost each year to unauthorised absences.⁸ Students who are disengaged are disproportionately likely to contribute to these troubling statistics.

The longer-term consequences of disengagement from school are also clear: wasted talent, poor employment outcomes, greater prevalence of risky and harmful behaviours, and so on. The number of young people who are NEET is now a common litmus test for the success of the Government's education and wider youth policy. Although the numbers are declining, still more than one in ten (12 per cent) 16–24-year-olds currently fall into this category, with the total number standing at close to 848,000.⁹ The UK ranks higher (worse) than the OECD average for the proportion of 15–19 and 20–24-year-olds who are NEET – a performance related to its high levels of economic inequality.¹⁰ The cost of allowing this generation to fall so far short of its potential has been estimated at £22 billion.¹¹

Tackling disengagement

A number of factors militate against finding a solution to educational disengagement. First is the sheer scale of the problem. It has been suggested that almost half (45 per cent) of students are disengaged from school by the time they sit their GCSEs.¹² This is despite a raft of initiatives to tackle poor attendance and challenging behaviour – estimated at a total cost over £1 billion in the 15 years to 2006.¹³

Second, disengagement eludes easy definition. Within school, disengaged students are not hard to identify; all teachers can readily point to the students on their school roll who simply do not ‘see the point’ in school. Research has looked in detail at the attitudes of disengaged students; a report by the National Centre for Social Research found that, among disengaged 14–16-year-olds, just 30 per cent thought working hard at school would help them get on in life, compared with 67 per cent of engaged students (a 37 percentage point difference).¹⁴ However, addressing disengagement effectively necessitates more than the ability to ‘know it when you see it’; it requires a good understanding of its underlying causes.

Existing evidence identifies a range of cognitive, behavioural and emotional risk factors. Student-level factors include low levels of core academic skills, low levels of social and emotional skills, having a SEN, and having poor mental health and wellbeing. Also important are environmental-level risk factors, such as parenting style, school context, peer group and bullying, through to structural factors including economic disadvantage.¹⁵ For example, we know that students eligible for FSM are more likely to be excluded from school than other students.

A large body of evidence from the UK and internationally shows how positive relationships and interactions with teachers boost grades and reduce truancy. Conversely, evidence shows that a breakdown in relationships with staff can spur a downward spiral of increasing disengagement.¹⁶ Age and stage, too, is important, with the transition from primary to secondary school recognised as a ‘critical window’ for intervening to prevent or mitigate disengagement. Students aged 12–14 are more likely than any other age group to be excluded from school.¹⁷

In this context, Demos identified coproduction as one potential solution to disengagement that has yet to be properly explored and applied in education, and particularly in the secondary school context in England. From our knowledge of the fields of health and social care, coproduction seemed a promising approach to school disengagement. The remainder of

this introduction explains coproduction in more detail, summarises the evidence for its effectiveness, and outlines the features which we believe make it a promising approach for addressing disengagement.

Coproduction

Coproduction describes a particular way of conceptualising public services. Developed by social reformer and innovator Edgar S Cahn, coproduction seeks to reframe the traditional provider–service-user relationship, recasting traditional ‘recipients’ of services as equal and active partners in their design and delivery. As Cahn puts it in his book *No More Throwaway People*:

[Coproduction] springs from an observation that something is missing in social programmes. That ‘something’ is the contribution that the ultimate beneficiary must supply in order to achieve the end result ultimately sought by producer and consumer... Coproduction entails a simple but profound shift in relationships... The relationship between professional and non-professional shifts from one of subordination and dependency to parity, mutuality, and reciprocity.¹⁸

Cahn outlines four key principles of coproduction, which are illustrated in box 1. These principles informed the design of our pilot programme.

Box 1 **The four key principles of coproduction¹⁹**

- *Principle 1 Treat people as assets*

Often, when someone needs extra support, their illness or impairment becomes all we see about them.

People who need support should not be defined by what they lack; they have other skills, strengths and experiences they can bring to help design and run

services. Disengaged students should therefore not be, or feel, defined by their disengagement and its consequences – as ‘the naughty kids’, ‘the absent kids’, ‘the underachieving kids’ and so on. Instead, they should feel that people are interested in their talents and ideas and how these can be used for the benefit of the school community.

- *Principle 2 Value work differently*

The principles of co-production remind us that we need to see and use the gifts and skills people have to offer; we also need to find ways to reward this work in ways that are not just about paying people in cash.

This stems from the idea that in society we tend to value what is done for money, giving less attention to all the unpaid work done for, by and between families, neighbours and communities. In the school setting, an analogy can be drawn with the way in which academic achievement is of primary value, with other activities and contributions to the school community attracting fewer rewards (and less investment).

- *Principle 3 Promote reciprocity*

This is about making sure that people are not just seen as, treated as, or expected to behave as ‘people who need help’. Everyone needs to be needed and valued... [not as a] big ‘problem’ for services to sort out.

Reciprocity allows people who use services to have the chance to give as well as to get support. This represents a big shift in expectations. In our context, it means that disengaged students take on responsibilities for doing things for other students, even staff – things that might formerly have been assumed to be the responsibility of staff.

· *Principle 4 Build social networks*

This is about remembering that people build and sustain communities and you have to be present to be included.

The fourth principle recognises the importance of building social networks in order for people to flourish. In the same way that individuals are assets who can be drawn upon in designing and delivering the services they access, so too are the people and institutions around them. In our context, this involves using relationships and networks beyond the classroom, to enrich learning and open up new opportunities.

Evidence from health and social care

The cornerstone of social care policy and practice in England is personalisation, or person-centred care. It is one of the founding principles of the modern English care system, as set out in the Care Act 2014. Coproduction is the fundamental process of achieving this.

Providers are now judged on their ability to provide care and support packages that meet the specific needs and goals of each individual care user. They are expected to work in partnership with individuals, using an asset-based approach – rather than ‘doing to’ and focusing on what people cannot do for themselves.

This represents a paradigm shift in the relationship between the service provider and the service user, which has demanded no less accommodation from the latter than the former. Service users have to take an active role in defining the objectives they hope to achieve, and then design and manage their care plan accordingly.

A considerable body of evidence suggests this approach improves health and care outcomes for individuals, and boosts a sense of independence, autonomy and ‘ownership’ for individuals who might otherwise be passive recipients of support and health services. For example, the Department of Health’s

pilot Year of Care programme explored how to involve people with long-term conditions (using diabetes as an exemplar) in their own care planning, across three locations in England. The programme evaluation recorded patients reporting an improved experience of care and professionals reporting improved knowledge and skills.²⁰ Such approaches can save the public purse, too. Nesta, which has collated much of the evidence on this topic, suggests savings from the programme People Powered Health could be equivalent to £4.4 billion across England per year, through reduced expenditure on A&E attendances, planned and unplanned admissions, and outpatient admissions.²¹

While personalisation in schools is not a new concept, and has made some headway, a belief that personalisation would allow each pupil to set their own curriculum and timetable – logistically very challenging in English schools – meant this approach has only had a limited impact on education policy. Coproduction, as a separate but related approach – focusing on partnership, asset-based approaches, and empowerment as a means of engaging service users (in this case, pupils) – has not been widely attempted. Demos wanted to transfer the learning from health and care and apply it to an education setting, to see whether the improved outcomes achieved in the former via coproduction could be reproduced in the latter.

Application in education

While coproduction in education is not as well developed as it is in the health service – especially so in the context of tackling disengagement – there are examples in this country and internationally which helped to inform our approach. These include:

- Learn to Lead, a UK programme, which has been adopted by more than 40 schools across the country. The initiative aims to give all students opportunities to lead projects that make a difference to their schools and wider communities. An evaluation by the University of Cambridge found these types of activities led to improvements in a range of social and

emotional skills for students, as well as commitment to learning and to school.²²

- Project-based learning (PBL), popularised in the US by the High Tech High charter schools. The idea of PBL is that projects grounded in real-world problems and issues drive the curriculum. Evidence from the US suggests that this approach can increase long-term retention of knowledge, problem-solving and collaboration skills, and positive attitudes towards learning. The Innovation Unit is currently running a related pilot in 24 secondary schools in England called REAL projects, sponsored by the Education Endowment Foundation.²³ Evaluators from the universities of Durham and York will report on the findings in spring 2017.²⁴
- The Kunskapsskolan Education Programme (KEP), originating in Sweden, aims to ‘put the student at the centre of the school’. At Kunskapsskolan schools, students and their parents are involved in designing individual learning plans, with students encouraged to learn at their own pace and in line with their own goals. Staff act as personal coaches, and deliver workshops, seminars and lectures on their subject specialism. In Sweden the performance of KEP schools is above the national average, and KEP schools outperform other schools with similar student demographics.²⁵ The KEP approach has expanded internationally, and the company Kunskapsskolan Education currently sponsors three academies in England through the Learning Schools Trust.

Our approach differs from the above initiatives in two important respects. First, it is a targeted approach at students who are disengaged. Second, we have sought to test what is possible to achieve with coproduction within the constraints of the English school system and curriculum, rather than – as in the case of KEP – seeking a more radical departure from that system.

It is important to distinguish coproduction from ‘student voice’. Many schools have developed substantial student voice initiatives so that students are given opportunities to have a say on key issues affecting their school. Coproduction is not the

same as these initiatives, however; particularly if these initiatives boil down to simply asking students what they think.

Coproduction is a certain way of giving students both voice and opportunities to act – in line with the principles outlined above.

A parallel development in education policy which merits mention is the renewed focus on the development of social and emotional skills. Skills like resilience, perseverance and ‘grit’ (being able to bounce back in the face of adversity); cooperation and pro-social skills; and self-control (good behaviour, and the ability to delay gratification) have been linked – like educational engagement – to desirable outcomes in education and later life. Moreover, there are clear affinities between the principles and practice of coproduction and the need to provide young people with the opportunity to develop such skills. Hence, a secondary aim of this pilot was to contribute to the growing evidence base for the importance of these skills and how best to develop them.²⁶

This pilot

The proposition of the pilot was therefore this: that students who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement *can be re-engaged* if they can be involved, as assets to the school, in decision-making and creating a positive school community. Most radical in the context of disengagement – and perhaps most difficult to achieve in the school setting – is the idea of reciprocity: that things for which staff might naturally take responsibility (for example running extracurricular clubs, even planning lessons) can be entrusted to students. We have sought to measure any resultant impact from our pilot on student outcomes including attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour, motivation and self-esteem.

1 Pilot and evaluation design

The Pupil Power pilot was designed to test whether coproduction might be an effective means of tackling educational disengagement in secondary schools. We are interested in two aspects of effectiveness:

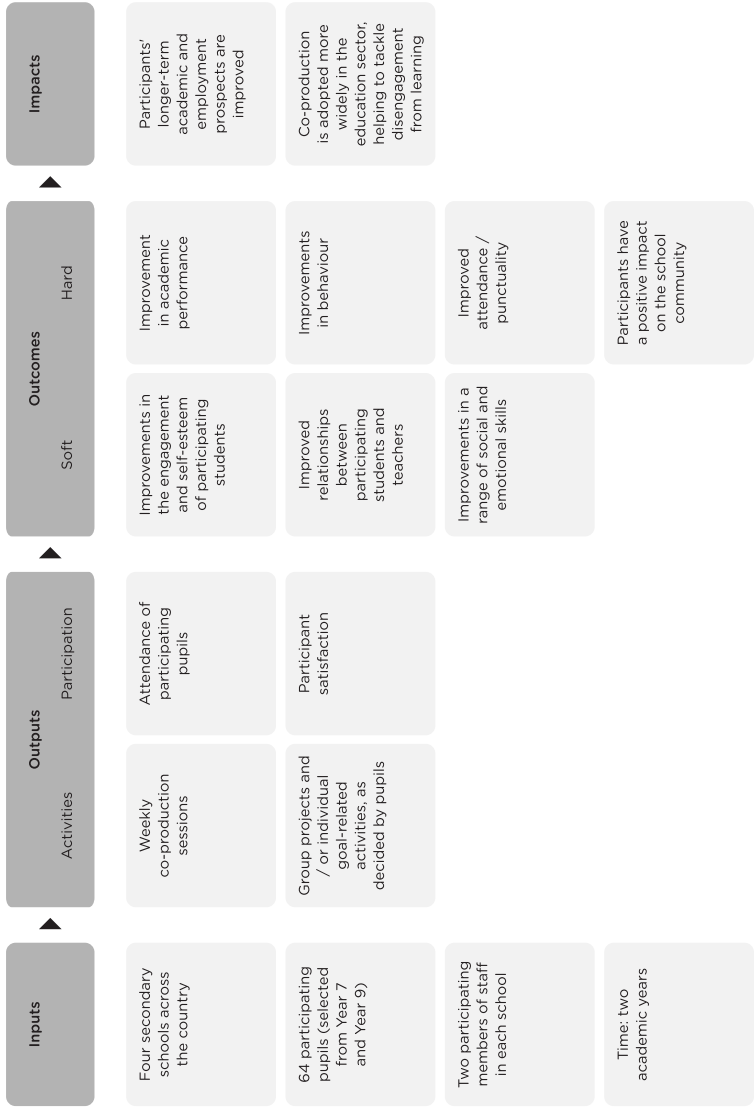
- We are concerned with the impact on student outcomes including attainment, attendance, behaviour and other ‘softer’ measures such as self-esteem and motivation, as well as the impact on staff delivering the programme and the wider school.
- Recognising that interventions can have an impact without being effective (for example, because the cost, time demands or disruption of implementing them outweighs any gains), we have also evaluated the practicability of coproduction within the constraints of the English schools system.

The pilot objectives can be summarised as follows:

- Up to 64 young people will have improved attendance, behaviour and performance in school, and express an increased sense of engagement, purpose and motivation regarding their educational journey.
- Eight teachers have learnt and built new skills to engage demotivated pupils through coproduction and encouraging a sense of ownership of educational outcomes.
- Four schools have improved their coproduction techniques and gained insights into what pupils want and value from school.
- The evidence base we create of the impacts of coproduction and pupil-led outcomes will inform both policy and practice.

Figure 1 shows an abbreviated version of our logic model for this pilot.

Figure 1 Pilot logic model



Pilot design

The Pupil Power pilot ran over the two academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15, in four secondary schools across the country.

Schools

Demos received some support from TeachFirst to identify and recruit four suitable schools to take part in the pilot. Three schools were identified through TeachFirst from among their host schools, and the fourth (in London) was recruited by Demos independently.

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the four schools.

For ease of reference, the four schools are referred to in the rest of this report by their location (Grimsby, Birmingham, Sheffield, London) rather than by name.

As the figures in table 1 show, three of our four schools scored in the uppermost quintile on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) – the common measure of school deprivation, which is used by TeachFirst to select partner schools. All four schools were mixed, and all four had a comprehensive (as opposed to selective) admissions policy. Three were academies associated with a sponsor, and one was local authority maintained.

The four schools vary significantly in size, proportion of pupils with EAL, and the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM (although, on the latter measure, all four are above the national average). Our schools therefore provided four very different contexts for conducting this pilot – as appropriate for a formative evaluation. Wherever feasible in our evaluation, we have interrogated the quantitative and qualitative data with a view to commenting on common or context-specific success factors or barriers to coproduction.

Students

In each pilot year, 32 students participated (64 in total). Students were selected from years 7 and 9. These school years were chosen to reflect the evidence (see introduction) that transitioning from

Table 1 **The characteristics of the schools in the Pupil Power pilot study**

School	John Whitgift Academy	Greenwood Academy	Firth Park Academy	Eastlea Community School	National average
Location	Grimsby	Birmingham	Sheffield	London borough of Newham	-
Age range	11-16	11-18	11-16	11-16	-
Number of pupils on roll (all ages)	515	606	1,053	891	957
Percentage of boys on roll	46%	47%	51%	45%	50%
Percentage of girls on roll	54%	53%	49%	55%	50%
Percentage of pupils with SEN with statement or on School Action Plus	7%	8%	9%	9%	7%
Percentage of pupils where English was not the first language	2%	7%	37%	70%	14%
Percentage of pupils eligible for FSM	24%	42%	39%	58%	16%
Percentage of pupils eligible for FSM at any time during the past 6 years	49%	67%	61%	68%	29%
School deprivation indicator (IDACI)	0.08	0.37	0.50	0.70	0.22
Percentage achieving five A*-C GCSEs (or equivalents) including in English and maths	39%	52%	40%	47%	57%

Source: RAISEonline (based on 2014 school census)²⁷

primary to secondary school is a risk factor for disengagement, and that the years before GCSE represent a ‘critical window’ for intervening to prevent disengagement. Schools were asked to select students who were either already disengaged or at risk of becoming so – showing signs, for example, of academic underperformance or challenging behaviour, missing lessons, and so on. Schools were also asked to take into account which students were most likely to benefit from participating. Therefore the students selected in any one school were not necessarily the *most* disengaged. For example, students with very low attendance or at very high risk of exclusion would be unlikely to benefit, because of the practicalities of ensuring their participation, while students whose barriers to engaging fully with school were primarily ‘external’ (eg they had high levels of SEN or poor home circumstances) would be unlikely to benefit from an intervention aimed at ‘internal’ drivers of disengagement, such as attitudes to learning.

Staff

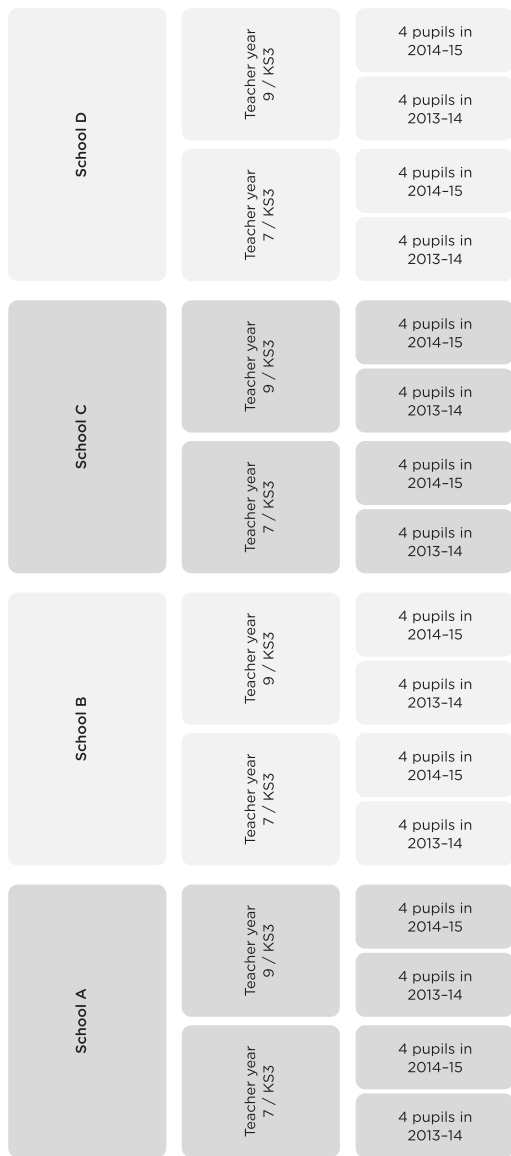
Eight school staff were chosen to work with the selected students over the two years. While we had envisaged the pilot being run by year 7 and year 9 form tutors in each school, we allowed schools to select the staff they thought were best suited to delivering the programme based on factors such as their availability, relevant skills or needs for professional development, and relationships with students. As discussed in detail later, three of the four schools had at least one member of non-teaching staff delivering the pilot in at least one year.

Figure 2 summarises the model.

Staff training

At the start of each pilot year, participating staff received training, designed and delivered jointly by Demos and a consultant with expertise in coproduction. (The training materials are included in appendix A.)

Figure 2 The pilot design model



Staff training was delivered in a single session of 1.5–3 hours, and consisted in:

- an exercise focused on the causes and symptoms of disengagement
- an introduction to coproduction in theory and practice, including an outline of the four key principles (students as assets, valuing work differently, reciprocity, and networks and connections)
- an exercise encouraging staff to identify existing tools or initiatives within the school that shared some of the features of coproduction (box 2 lists the suggestions made by staff as part of this exercise at one of our schools)
- an introduction to a practical toolkit to use in initial sessions with students
- an exercise exploring ‘hopes and fears’ for the pilot

Across all schools, staff expressed a strong degree of understanding of the concept of coproduction following training, and reported that they were confident in being able to put it into practice. Staff at all schools could readily draw connections between the ideas introduced in the training and existing initiatives within their school. There was widespread agreement that the underlying logic of the pilot made sense as a strategy for tackling disengagement.

Box 2 **Suggestions made in a staff training exercise seeking to identify current practice in participants’ schools that has features in common with coproduction**

- *Extended Services (an initiative whereby the school offers extracurricular activities within and outside term-time, as well as adult education)*
- *ViVo points (a school reward system, including for non-academic achievement)*
- *restorative justice (students involved in resolving problems that have arisen)*

- *students taking on teacher role (as a teaching method)*
- *student reception*
- *a healthy fruit tuck shop*

Student briefing

Participating students attended an initial session with Demos and the external consultant. These briefing sessions included:

- a (tailored) introduction to coproduction in theory, and an explanation of the practicalities of the pilot; the project was branded Pupil Power to make it accessible and engaging
- an opportunity to ask questions of the research team
- an exercise brainstorming what participants thought was ‘working’ and ‘not working’ in school

The aim of the brainstorming exercise was twofold:

- to motivate students to take part – based on the premise that the motivation to work towards a goal starts from identifying something one wants to change
- to provide participating staff with initial ideas for potential areas of focus for the pilot

Students wrote ideas on green and red cards, which were displayed for the whole group to see. The research staff delivering the training discussed students’ suggested improvements in detail, encouraging them to provide more detail or clarification, prioritise improvements, and suggest ways of enacting them. Box 3 lists the answers students gave during this exercise at one of our schools.

The majority of participating students also said they had good knowledge of the pilot following our meeting with them.

Intervention

Following training, the delivery of the pilot (intervention) was in large part left to the students and school staff involved, with

Box 3

Responses by students to the question: 'What's working / not working about school?'

Working (green cards)	Not working (red)	Ideas for things to change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Some lessons are fun · Some good lessons · History · PE · When you can change what you want to do · Younger teachers aren't as boring as the older teachers · Basketball training is good after school · Clubs after school · Time to do work set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Boring · Not as much practical work · The lessons aren't hands-on · Hardly any active lessons · Teachers blame the naughtier ones · Teachers don't get involved · There is hardly no fun and too much homework · Not enough time to bring/do homework · Meals don't taste good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Longer break · Better lessons – more fun, more practicals · More hands-on work · More to do at break and dinner, eg football · More school competitions · Have more respect · Cinema is not used enough · More school trips · More PE · More football things like AstroTurf · More after-school clubs

support provided by Demos as and when required. Staff were asked to meet students for weekly sessions, but schools were otherwise given discretion over all other aspects of these meetings, including their scheduling, duration, composition (one-to-one or group; single year group or mixed year group), and structure and content, though the training encouraged them to involve students in deciding these.

Collective meetings tended to consist in identifying a problem in the school and working together to design and implement a solution (with school staff acting in a facilitating role); during one-to-one sessions students set their own personal goals and targets. Over the course of the pilot we observed a combination of the two approaches, though the group-based activities were more common.

Evaluation methodology

As explained above, our evaluation sought to measure two things:

- the impact of the pilot (the outcomes for participating students, staff and the school as a whole)
- the process of setting up and implementing the pilot – with a view to identifying success factors and challenges to inform change between pilot years, and yield lessons for a wider audience (‘formative evaluation’)

A summary of the research activities undertaken as part of this two-pronged evaluation process is given below.

Collection and analysis of school data to measure ‘hard’ outcomes for students

During the pilot we gathered data on participating students’ academic performance (attainment), attendance, punctuality and behaviour, permitting us to analyse changes in these variables over the course of the relevant academic year. To obtain this ‘hard’ data, we established a formal arrangement with the data manager at each school, and were sent updates each term. We gathered the same data for a comparison group to help us try to isolate the impact of the intervention (see section below).

Characteristics

Schools provided Demos with data on the characteristics of each student, such as their prior attainment band, SEN status and

eligibility for FSM. Comparing this with the school profile as a whole (based on internal reports provided by each school, and analysis of publicly available, school-level RAISEonline data), we were able to see whether pupils with certain characteristics were over- or under-represented among the targeted participants. This allowed us to better understand how schools had selected participants, and gave an insight into the profile of students perceived to be at greater risk of disengagement within each school context. Participant characteristics are discussed in detail in chapter 2.

Attainment

To capture changes in academic performance (attainment and progress), we used teacher assessment data received from each of the schools. The majority of students were assessed (at least) each term using key stage 3 sub-levels, which we converted to point scores for the analysis.²⁸

Our intention was to calculate the proportion of students making expected progress in three core subjects – English, maths and science – between the autumn and summer terms, and compare these data to those for the comparison group. This method was complicated by some schools switching to using a key stage 4 (GCSE-level) grading system for the year 9 students. We therefore also converted key stage 4 grades into points scores (a different points system), and used this to calculate the proportion of all students making progress (on any measure). In one case, where the transition between grading systems was made mid-year, we were unable to use the data.

Attendance

We have used unauthorised absences, as opposed to overall absences, as a rough proxy for truancy. We calculated the change in the number of unauthorised absences reported for students between the autumn and summer terms, and we here report the proportion of students whose records show a positive change, negative change, or no change. From our conversations with school staff, we were expecting attendance data in general to be

worse in the summer term, making the use of a comparison group more important.

Feedback from schools indicated that punctuality was more of a challenge than truancy for the majority of participating students. We therefore measured changes in punctuality (as recorded by session in school registers) between terms.

Behaviour

Each school had a different system for monitoring behaviour, making it difficult to capture the whole picture. We gathered data from each school based on reported incidents or 'behaviour points', and again calculated the difference on these measures between the autumn and summer terms for students, and compared this to our comparison group. Because the schools use different measurements, we have simply identified proportions of participating students for whom the recorded data show improvements, no change, or getting worse over the pilot, on whichever system the schools used. One school did not have any points system, so has not been included in the results.

Baseline and post-intervention surveys of participating students

Students completed surveys before and after taking part in the pilot. The comparison group also completed them. For practical reasons, these were administered to students by school staff on behalf of the research team. Schools were given the option of completing surveys online (via SurveyMonkey) or in hard copy (in which case they were returned via post). Hard copy was generally preferred by schools.

Our survey design was based on a review of existing surveys administered to secondary school age pupils – in particular, tools aiming to capture similar variables, such as feelings about school and motivation. We also included a small number of questions adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a standardised tool for capturing the self-esteem of secondary age pupils.²⁹ Our questions were designed to capture changes in students' self-reported engagement with school, self-esteem, behaviour and relationships with staff. The surveys also

probed some contextual factors – for example, how involved students felt that their parents were in their education – to further inform our picture of participants’ characteristics. The survey questions and responses are listed in appendix C.

Baseline and post-intervention surveys of subject teachers

‘Perception’ surveys were administered to subject teachers at baseline and at the end of each pilot year. We asked questions about teachers’ perceptions of each participating student and comparison group student, in relation to the same indicators as the student surveys – attitudes towards school, motivation, and so forth.

Our aim was for surveys to be completed by each student’s English, maths and science teachers, so that we could compare their perceptions with students’ actual performance over the year in those subjects (according to the attainment data). However, as we had a low response rate, in the final analysis we used a single, ‘reference’ teacher’s baseline and post-intervention surveys for each student. The survey questions and responses are listed in appendix D.

The majority of staff and student survey questions used a five-point Likert scale, asking respondents the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements. We measured the change in the proportion of respondents agreeing before and after the intervention.

Coproduction session observation

Demos researchers attended coproduction sessions each month at each of the four schools for the first six months of the pilot, and then provided support as and when required by the schools. This informed the formative aspect of the evaluation, allowing the research team to understand how schools were implementing coproduction, assess how successfully they were adhering to the principles of coproduction (‘model fidelity’), and provide the opportunity for two-way feedback between Demos and school staff on emerging challenges and steps to improve the process.

Interviews with participating students

We conducted interviews at the end of each pilot year with the students who participated. We sought to gain general feedback on the experience of taking part in the pilot: what students had done, whether they found it worthwhile, and what improvements they would like to make for future students. We also asked what changes students had seen over the course of the year – academically and otherwise – and whether they would attribute any of these to their participation in Pupil Power.

Interviews with participating school staff

We asked staff what they thought had changed for participating students over the course of the year, both academically and non-academically, and to what extent they would attribute any changes to the pilot. We also asked a range of questions relating to the pilot's effect on the staff member's own skills and relationships with students, challenges of implementation, and what improvements could be made to the project (for the formative element of the evaluation).

Interviews with school senior leadership teams

In the course of each pilot year, the research team sought feedback from the schools' senior leadership teams about the progress of the pilot, and the impact (if any) they felt it was having on students, staff and the school as a whole. Again, this was an opportunity for staff to raise any concerns about any actions required to be taken at senior leadership level to improve the process (for example, timetabling changes).

Comparison group

Separately from choosing participants, we asked schools each year to select a second group of eight students who would not participate in the pilot but would act as a comparison group. The same quantitative data were collected on these students as on participating students, which allowed us to attempt to isolate the independent impact of the pilot. We asked schools to select

students for the comparison group who were broadly similar to the participant group in their characteristics and baseline attendance, attainment and behaviour data.

It was not our aim to create a strictly matched control group (which would have represented a significant burden for participating schools, and may not have been possible given data limitations). Nonetheless, the two groups – participants and comparison – were very similar on the majority of their characteristics, including gender, ethnicity, prior attainment band, eligibility for FSM in the last six years (Pupil Premium indicator), EAL and SEN status (see appendix B). However, the baseline student surveys found more significant differences in the two groups' attitudes to school, and therefore the usefulness of the comparison group for identifying impact is limited. Furthermore, we anticipated correctly that some participating students might drop out of the pilot in the course of each year. Where this occurred in the first term, we allowed schools to substitute students who were in the designated comparison group where they wished to do so, judging that it was preferable to maintain the number of participants rather than ensure the robustness of the comparison sample. Four such substitutions were made. Where this occurred, we recruited new students to the comparison group, and re-administered baseline surveys.

Data limitations

Where we discuss the results of surveys and data analysis below, the samples are up to 64 for the selected students and comparison group. However, for the surveys we have included only pupils completing both baseline and post-intervention surveys, and for school data on attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour, only pupils who completed the relevant pilot year rather than moving school. (See appendix C for a complete list of survey responses, and sample sizes.)

Caution should be applied in interpreting the survey data for the following reasons:

- While we have reported the survey results for all participants, there were in fact varying degrees of participation between students and across schools, with some students attending all sessions and some very few.
- Given the already very small sample size, we have presented data from the first and second year together, so there is a time disparity.
- After reviewing the response patterns when inputting the data, we had some concerns about the veracity of some students' responses.
- We provide figures from the comparison group surveys for the sake of completeness only. While the characteristics of the two groups were very similar (see appendix B), their survey responses at baseline were not.

Information on students' attainment, attendance and behaviour is extremely helpful when seeking a better understanding of the students taking part and their wider school life during the pilot. Nonetheless, because of the short period over which we were measuring changes on these variables (one academic year, for each cohort), the likelihood of observing significant changes is small. This is, of course, a widespread challenge for evaluating school-based interventions.

Throughout this report, we therefore prioritise the qualitative data. We believe such data – gathered from students, staff and senior leaders – are vital to understanding the true impact of this small scale and necessarily experimental pilot, capturing meaningful individual-level change which is not evident in quantitative analysis of the whole group. Furthermore, the primary value of this evaluation is as a formative endeavour; we hope that, by going into detail about our own (and the schools') learning process over the two years of this pilot, we provide useful lessons for other schools about 'what works' in re-engaging students in their learning.

2 Baseline data

This chapter outlines key information at baseline about students participating in the Pupil Power pilot. It sets out pupil characteristics derived from schools' internal data. It also outlines findings from the baseline surveys of students and staff, including participants' level of engagement with school, their self-reported wellbeing, and their relationship with staff.

Student characteristics

Table 2 summarises the characteristics data we gathered about participants. To put this in context, we have included data for the same variables at the school level, and at national level (this applies to the 2013/14 academic year unless otherwise stated).

Figures 3–8 apply to all participants, and cover both pilot years and all four schools unless otherwise stated ($n = 64$). A summary table containing this information alongside the comparison group is available in appendix B.

Gender

Almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of students taking part in Pupil Power were male; just over a quarter were female (27 per cent) (figure 3). More boys participated than girls in all of the schools. However, the proportion varied across schools, with one school selecting almost all boys to take part (Grimsby), and another choosing closer to a fifty-fifty gender split (Birmingham).

Ethnicity

We have organised the ethnicity data we obtained from schools into 'parent categories' (as used by the Office for National Statistics).

Table 2

The characteristics of participants in the Pupil Power pilot compared with the same variables at school and national level

	John Whitgift Academy	Greenwood Academy	Firth Park Academy	Eastlea Community School	All participants	National
	Participants	Participants	Participants	Participants		
Gender	School	School	School	School		
Male	100%	69%	56%	75%	73%	50%
Female	0%	31%	44%	25%	27%	50%
Ethnicity (1)	Participants	Participants	Participants	Participants		
White	98%	78%	60%	53%	76%	78%
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	2%	13%	7%	0%	5%	4%
Asian/Asian British	0%	0%	27%	13%	10%	10%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0%	6%	0%	33%	10%	5%
Arab/other ethnic group	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Minority ethnic pupils	2%	19%	33%	47%	25%	25%
Deprivation indicators	School	School	School	School		
Eligible for free school meals	19%	42%	38%	44%	41%	16%
Pupil Premium indicator (Ever-6)	63%	88%	75%	88%	78%	29%

SEN (2)	Percentage of pupils with a special educational need	13%	13%	56%	26%	19%	16%	44%	23%	33%	18%
EAL	Percentage of pupils with English not as first language	0%	2%	0%	7%	19%	37%	31%	70%	13%	14%
Attainment Band (3)	Low	19%	17%	50%	17%	6%	27%	31%	31%	27%	15%
	Middle	75%	61%	44%	66%	75%	59%	69%	43%	66%	52%
	High	6%	23%	6%	17%	19%	14%	0%	26%	8%	33%
	N	16	515	16	606	16	1,053	16	891	64	3,181,361

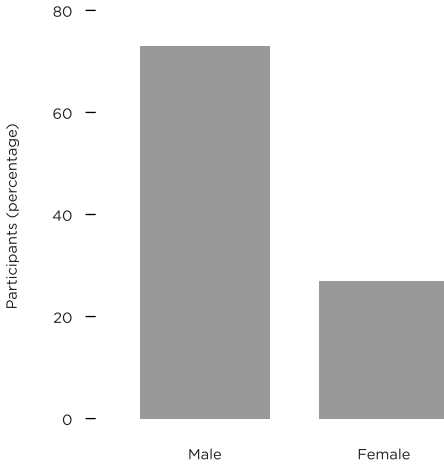
(1) Minority ethnic pupils includes all pupils who are classified as belonging to an ethnic group other than White British.

(2) Participants designated as having SEN at each school are those whose school record indicates either a SEN statement, an Education Health and Care Plan, School Action or School Action Plus, or other SEN Support. School level and national figures are taken from the most recent published RAISEonline data (based on the 2014 school census), and combine pupils with a statement or EHCP with those receiving other support (School Action/School Action Plus).

(3) Attainment band figures for each school are based on RAISEonline data published for the 2013/14 Key Stage 4 cohort. We have made the assumption that the whole school will have a similar proportion in each band. Similarly, national figures for prior attainment bands are based on Department for Education GCSE results data for 2013/14 (showing the proportion of pupils in each band who sat their GCSEs in Summer 2014). It is worth noting, however, that 2014 Key Stage 2 data shows 21 per cent of those who left primary school in 2014 are in a low attainment band, compared to 15 per cent of the Key Stage 4 cohort in 2014.

Source: RAISEonline and Demos dataset³⁰

Figure 3 **The gender of participating students**



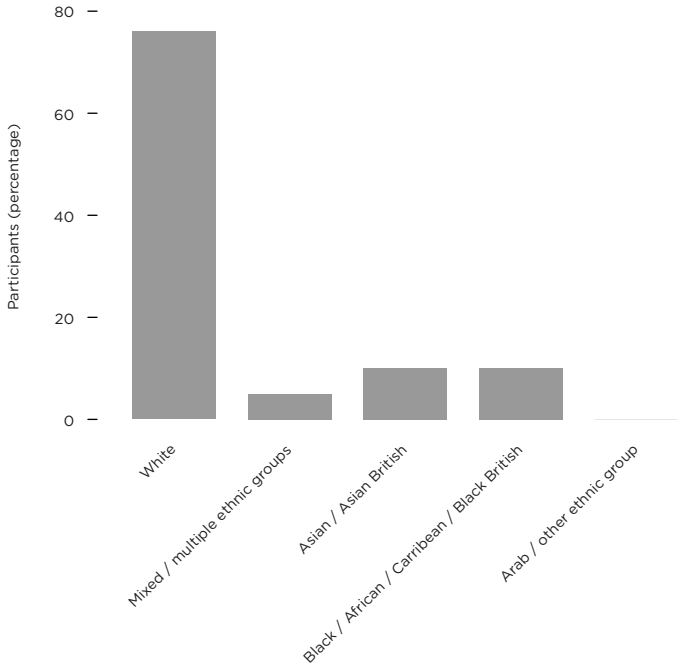
Source: Demos dataset

The ethnic breakdown of all participating students was as follows:

- 76 per cent were in the White ethnic group (all of whom were White British).
- 5 per cent were from mixed or multiple ethnic groups.
- 10 per cent were Asian or Asian British.
- 10 per cent were in the Black, African, Caribbean or Black British ethnic group (figure 4).

The proportion of students who were White British in each school ranged from 100 per cent (Grimsby) to 53 per cent (Newham).

Figure 4 **The ethnicity of participating students**

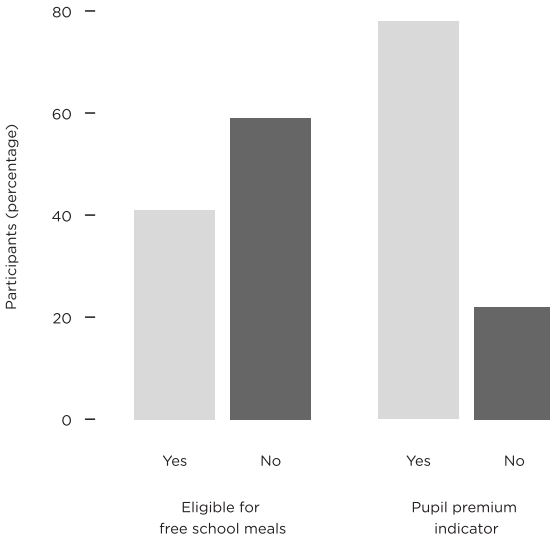


Source: Demos dataset

Deprivation

To capture the socio-economic profile of participating students, we collected data on free school meal eligibility – the common measure for disadvantage based on parents’ access to certain benefits such as Income Support. We looked at both those students currently registered as eligible for FSM and those who had been registered at any time in the last six years (figure 5). (The latter is the ‘Ever 6’ FSM measure, linked to schools’ Pupil Premium funding.³¹ It recognises that pupils who have been in

Figure 5 **Whether participants were eligible for FSM or had a Pupil Premium indicator**

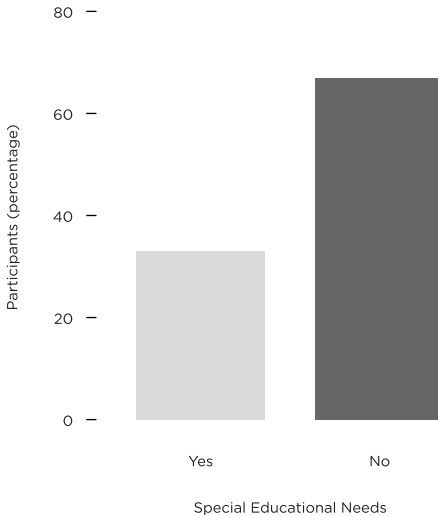


Source: Demos dataset

receipt of FSM do not lose their additional educational needs when their eligibility changes, and that some children will be from families who move in and out of low-paid work.)

As stated in the introduction, low socio-economic status is a risk factor for disengagement. While we did not stipulate that the pilot should be targeted at students receiving FSM, around four in ten students (41 per cent) were receiving FSM during the pilot. Almost eight in ten (78 per cent) had a Pupil Premium indicator on their school record, indicating they had been eligible for FSM within the last six years. This has implications for the future sustainability and scalability of Pupil Power beyond the life of this pilot. Our formative evaluation findings indicate that for schools to implement this or a similar initiative, particularly on a larger scale, they might require additional

Figure 6 **Whether participating students had a special educational need**



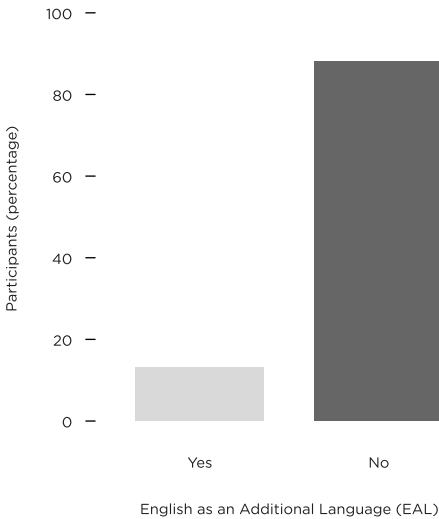
Source: Demos dataset

financial resource – to fund support staff time, or to purchase resources. Funding allocated under the Pupil Premium would seem to be a potential source of this, but it is conditional, in that schools are required to demonstrate that this money has been spent on interventions that are targeted at students in receipt of Pupil Premium funding (although other students may benefit), and contribute to closing the attainment gap between these and other students.

Special educational needs

A third (33 per cent) of participating students were on their school's SEN register, which covers all students receiving additional support, including but not limited to those with a

Figure 7 **Whether participating students had English as an additional language**



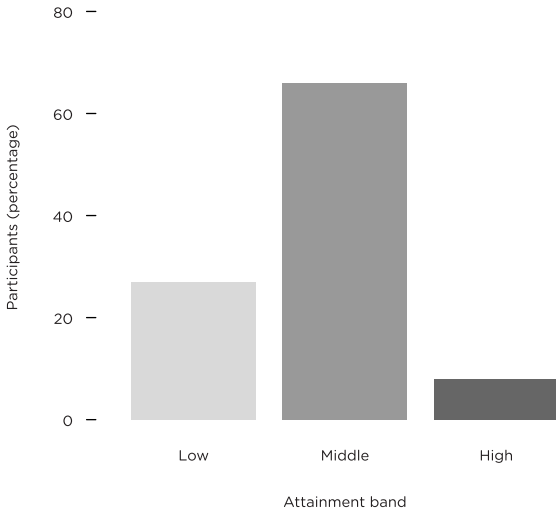
Source: Demos dataset

SEN statement or an education, health and care plan currently in place (figure 6).³² While all schools selected at least one student with SEN to take part in the project, the number varied between schools. One school (Birmingham) felt this type of intervention would fit well in the broader framework of their behaviour management programme, which is targeted largely towards pupils with autism spectrum condition and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (both of which are SEN categories). More than half of the participants in Birmingham were recorded as having SEN.

English as an additional language

Just 13 per cent of all participants had EAL (figure 7). Two schools – Newham and Sheffield – had higher proportions with

Figure 8 **The prior attainment bands of participating students**



Source: Demos dataset

EAL (31 per cent and 19 per cent), while the other two schools had no students with EAL.

Prior attainment band

Prior attainment bands reflect the performance of students at the end of primary school. A student's attainment band is determined by whether they achieve a level 4 in English and maths by the end of key stage 2 – taken as the benchmark for being able to access the curriculum at secondary school (being 'secondary-ready') and being likely to go on to achieve at least a C grade in those subjects at GCSE. Low attaining students achieve below a level 4 in key stage 2 tests, those in the middle band are at level 4, and those in the high attainment band are above level 4.³³

Students participating in our pilot had the following prior attainment bands:

- 27 per cent had low prior attainment.
- 66 per cent were in the middle attainment band.
- 8 per cent had high prior attainment (figure 8).

Nationally, around a quarter of students leave primary school without attaining level 4 in reading, writing and maths (21 per cent in 2014) – a slightly smaller but similar proportion to those with low prior attainment in our pilot.³⁴ However, two schools placed more emphasis on involving pupils with low prior attainment in the pilot: half of the students at the school in Birmingham (50 per cent), and almost a third (31 per cent) at the school in Newham were in the low prior attainment band.

We expected low prior attainment to be a strong influence on schools' selection of year 7 participants, given that staff had less data on, and less prior knowledge of, these students. In fact, year 7s and year 9s who were chosen to participate were equally likely to have low prior attainment (28 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively).

Basis for selection

As explained in the previous chapter, we asked schools to select students who were already showing signs of disengagement or whom they deemed at risk of being so. Qualitative data gathered through interviews suggested a range of reasons governing student selection, including (low-level) disruptive or challenging behaviour, low attainment, and a more general perceived lack of focus or application in lessons. Notably, this pattern is very similar to that observed by the researchers at the National Foundation for Educational Research in an earlier study on interventions to tackle disengagement, in which schools were also free to select participants.³⁵ School data showed (and staff interviews confirmed) that the students selected for our pilot did not have particular problems with skipping school.

Schools reported that they found it easier to select year 9 participants than year 7s, as indicators of disengagement were easier to identify (and more distinguishable from, difficulty 'settling in' to secondary school), and data more readily

available, for older students. We discuss the challenges of the selection process further in chapter 4.

Baseline survey data

Baseline surveys of students and staff present a mixed picture of the levels of disengagement among participants. Survey data were also collected on the comparison group, although, as discussed above, their responses (which are available in appendix C) diverged considerably from those of the participant group. This unexpected level of divergence at baseline suggests that the participant group's results should be interpreted with considerable caution.

Contrary to expectations, the majority of participants (72 per cent) said they liked school, with 28 per cent saying they did not. Similarly, 60 per cent of students were thought to be interested in being at school by their subject staff, compared with 32 per cent who reportedly were not.

However, there was a significant discrepancy between the proportions of students reporting that they were achieving their potential at school, compared with the opinions of teaching staff. Almost eight in ten students (79 per cent) said they were achieving their potential at school, while only 19 per cent were thought to be doing so by their teachers.

While staff reported that 60 per cent of the participating students were not easily motivated, a surprisingly high proportion – 36 per cent – *were* thought by their teachers to be easily motivated. This raises questions about the appropriateness of selection criteria for the pilot – particularly with year 7 students. In addition, it perhaps also signals how the same students can be perceived differently by different staff (for example, the staff selecting them for the pilot compared with the subject teachers we surveyed).

In the student surveys, we also found:

- Just over one-quarter (28 per cent) of students said they found lessons interesting often or always, 43 per cent sometimes did, and 25 per cent never or rarely did.

- More than one-third (39 per cent) of students wanted to come to school often or always, 41 per cent only sometimes did, and 17 per cent never or rarely did.

We asked students about their behaviour and found out the staff's views on this through a survey:

- Just over a third (37 per cent) of students said they got into trouble often or always, 33 per cent said they sometimes did, and 30 per cent said they never or rarely did.
- Staff thought that 38 per cent of students were thought to pay attention in lessons but 60 per cent did not.
- Staff thought more than half (53 per cent) of students were disruptive in class compared with 45 per cent who were not.

Relationships with staff

Central to coproduction in education is the relationship between staff and students. We wanted to know how participating students felt about staff in their school before taking part in the pilot. We again found a mixed response:

- 43 per cent of students said they got on well with staff often or always, 43 per cent sometimes did, and 9 per cent never or rarely did.
- 41 per cent felt that staff often or always listened to their opinions, while 37 per cent sometimes did, and 19 per cent never or rarely did.
- In the large majority of cases (83 per cent), staff reported that they had a good relationship with the participating students.

Wellbeing

At baseline the majority of participants answered our questions on wellbeing positively. We used questions adapted from the standard Rosenberg Scale³⁶ to measure self-esteem. Most (92 per cent of) participants said they were 'basically happy' with who

they were. However, 46 per cent also said they were ‘too hard on themselves sometimes’.

We included two questions focused on application and perseverance. We found that almost all (94 per cent of) participants felt that if they tried hard they could do well. However, more than a third (37 per cent) said that if they fail at something once they give up.

Our student surveys also sought to get a sense of the supportive networks around participating students. Almost all participants reported having supportive parents: 98 per cent felt that their parents cared about what they do at school; while 93 per cent felt their parents helped them when they had a problem at school. The vast majority of participants also reported having good friends at school, with 98 per cent agreeing with this at baseline. Nonetheless, just over a quarter (27 per cent) reported finding it hard to ‘fit in’ at school. Unsurprisingly, this was more prevalent in year 7 (43 per cent), than year 9 (16 per cent).

3 Pupil Power in action

This chapter outlines what participating students and staff did in each of the four schools over the course of the pilot.

The practical implementation of coproduction was left to the discretion of individual schools. Implementation varied depending on practical factors (eg time and resource) within different schools, whole school and staff ethos and priorities, and – exactly as intended – students’ goals, priorities and talents. In addition (and as previously noted) there were varying degrees of involvement in the pilot among participating students – either because of variable student interest, or because of practical difficulties in meeting regularly (which we discuss further in the next chapter). In practice, it was most often a smaller, ‘core’ group of regular attendees who were the driving force behind projects. All of these variables affected the scope of projects undertaken, and the reported impact of the pilot on students, staff and schools as a whole (next chapter).

In the main, pupils worked together in groups – either in separate year groups or with years 7 and 9 together – to identify something they wanted to change about school. This led to a number of different practical projects. We describe four of these below, one from each participating school.

Lunchtime sports club in Grimsby

Year 9 students in Grimsby identified a lack of lunchtime activities as a cause of boredom and, consequently, disruptive behaviour. Working with the participating staff member, they put the case for a lunchtime football club to the head of PE, who agreed. The students were involved in all aspects of setting up and running the club; they approached staff who might be willing to supervise it, ensured equipment was available, and

advertised it around the school. They also dealt with problems collectively as they arose – for example, deciding how to deal with older students who caused disruption in the club, and discussing how to ensure that girls were involved as well as boys.

One of the students explained how the project had been set up and was progressing:

We came up with ideas, we made a football thing at dinner so you could go there instead of getting into trouble. This worked well until the year above ruined it. We've come up with an idea about a computer club. At the minute we're trying to raise money to make an indoor or outdoor Astro turf pitch on the school site.

Launching a petition to change school uniform, Newham

Student participants at our London school started by compiling a group shortlist of things they wanted to change in school, before voting on the most popular ones. As a result, they decided to focus on campaigning to change the school uniform. The member of staff working with them supported them to design a petition, which they began to circulate around school at break and lunchtime. Unfortunately, the school senior leadership staff did not allow student petitions on site without their prior permission. The staff participant, who had been unaware of this school policy, had to explain to the students why they could not progress with this idea. The students were disappointed, but a subsequent meeting with the senior leadership team helped to restore lost motivation to an extent. The students' shortlist of ideas was shared with the senior leaders, who offered feedback on what changes they would be more or less receptive to.

Tidying and replanting a school garden, Birmingham

In Birmingham, a sub-group of students from years 7 and 9 worked together to raise funds to replant a neglected garden on the school site. The garden had originally been planted *pro bono*

by a large business headquartered near the school, in remembrance of a former teacher, but had since fallen into disrepair. Initially, the students brainstormed ways to raise money, and decided to run a tombola, which they advertised around school. Participating staff accompanied the students on a trip to source plants, and students kept a running total of how much they had left to spend. Staff also helped to source a large donation of woodchips from a local supplier. Staff had encouraged students to take pictures of the garden beforehand to assist their planning, and students clearly enjoyed comparing these with ‘after’ shots showing the completed garden.

One of the students told us:

We started off just raising a bit of money. First of all, we started with the Christmas tombola, just before Christmas. We raised just over £170 on that. Once Christmas had ended we had all that money so we decided to get some ideas of what we could do with that money. We needed a little bit more, so what we done was set up a tuck shop with that money. So we went out, bought some more food, drinks, and we raised a bit more. I think it was £200 from the tuck shop over five weeks. So with that money, eventually, we were able to go down to the local B&Q and obviously get some plants and everything.

Supporting Tour de France celebrations, Sheffield

The school in Sheffield was on the route of the 2014 Tour de France, and the school planned a number of special activities and displays to mark the occasion. Staff participants had initially struggled to arrange meetings and to encourage students to come up with actionable ideas for group projects, so they saw the whole-school celebrations as a welcome opportunity for the Pupil Power students to be involved. Students were given a choice over how to be involved (eg making things, creating displays), and were encouraged to divide up tasks within their group.

One of the students described her involvement in the activities:

I've been making stuff for the Tour de France. We made posters, we made key fobs and big bike displays, and we've got an on-the-spot bike in school to see. We all came to the group and we decided what we're going to do, who would do what jobs.

In addition to group work, many participating students discussed their personal goals with staff. The focus of these one-to-one sessions tended to be on behaviour, and on individual barriers to engaging in particular lessons. Staff supported students to make changes such as:

- changing a seating plan so it was no longer in register order
- making history lessons more interactive
- consistently wearing shoes, rather than trainers, to school
- completing homework once or twice (as opposed to no times) per week
- designing a practical experiment for a science lesson

4 Impact

This chapter and chapter 5 outline the findings of our evaluation. This chapter focuses on the impact the pilot had on participating students, staff and the wider school, in turn. As discussed in chapter 1, we are concerned primarily with the impact on students' attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour, as well as 'softer' outcomes such as motivation and self-esteem. However, the qualitative data point to a wider range of academic and non-academic impacts, expected and unexpected, and variously more or less amenable to quantitative measurement. Some of the impacts reported as most significant by staff were seemingly small, individual-level changes in attitude or behaviour. Chapter 5 outlines the findings of our process – or 'formative' – evaluation, looking at how successfully the pilot was implemented over the two years and across the four settings, and why.

As explained in chapter 1, we used a range of evaluation methods to capture outcomes, including:

- analysis of school data on 'hard' outcomes – attainment and progress, attendance and punctuality, and behaviour, for participants and the comparison group
- baseline and post-intervention surveys of participating students and a comparison group, focusing on motivation, self-esteem and wellbeing, and attitudes to learning
- baseline and post-intervention surveys of teaching staff, gauging their perceptions of students' motivation and attitudes to learning, for participants and the comparison group
- end of year interviews with participating pupils and staff

It is worth reiterating that where percentages are used in the sections below, the sample is up to 64 participating pupils –

and combine pupils from both pilot years. Therefore fairly substantial percentage changes can indicate relatively minor actual changes.

Students

Overall impressions

In our end of year interviews with students we began by asking for overall impressions of coproduction. While there was a spectrum of participation among selected students, those students whose involvement in the pilot was regular and maintained throughout the year were enthusiastic about the idea of Pupil Power. Specifically, students tended to appreciate the element of choice, the ability to speak freely, and the opportunity to draw on their personal talents. The following quotes from our student interviews are illustrative:

If you do things at home you really like doing, they take it out of you and bring it into school.

You could say what you didn't like without anyone taking it offensive.

What I like is not just getting out of lessons – you come and discuss about how to make changes.

Getting to choose what you want to change in school and why.

Asked to identify the 'good things' about Pupil Power, several students mentioned teamwork, or working with friends.

Interestingly, some of the 'good things' students identified were things that were not strictly germane to coproduction – instead, they were to do with participation being mandatory. This suggests that while some staff participants deviated from the full coproduction model, there were benefits to doing so; clearly, being slightly outside their comfort zone worked well for some students, as these comments show:

[One of the good things is] that I get to do activities that I wouldn't really get into if I didn't have to.

They give you choices on how much to get involved, but they haven't made it so you can completely leave it out.

It's quite fun working with people that I don't usually work with.

Most of the 'bad things' students cited about Pupil Power could be seen as failures on one or more of the dimensions of coproduction (see box 1 in the introduction). This included not being allowed to progress with a project idea ('that we didn't go forward with it'; 'that it didn't work'), having focused too much on individual behaviour and not having talked about the wider things in school (as per the initial session led by Demos researchers), and lack of wider school impact ('it hasn't really got out there that much...; if people knew about it they could support us more, maybe give us donations').

Attainment and progress

While we sought to capture any impact on participating pupils' academic attainment and progress, the period over which we were measuring was very short. As explained in chapter 1, to do this we collected data from each school on teacher assessments conducted during the relevant pilot year in the three core subjects of English, maths and science. Alongside this, we used interviews with staff and pupils to help identify which, if any, changes could be attributed to taking part in the pilot.

As expected, in the main only small progress was made by the majority of selected pupils over the course of the year in teacher assessments, and there was no appreciable difference between the outcomes of the selected pupil group and the comparison group. The majority of selected pupils did make progress in English, maths and science over the course of the pilot:

- 73 per cent of selected pupils made progress in English over the course of the relevant year.
- 53 per cent of selected pupils made progress in maths over the relevant year.
- 70 per cent of selected pupils made progress in science over the relevant year.

Our surveys found a 6 percentage point increase in the proportion of selected pupils considered to be achieving their potential by teachers (from 19 per cent to 25 per cent of pupils), but conversely a 9 percentage point decrease in the proportion of selected pupils themselves who thought they were (from 79 per cent to 70 per cent).

When interviewed, staff participants said they thought the impact on academic outcomes was hard to quantify, or to attribute to participation in the pilot. This was especially so for students who were involved in other schemes or supported in other ways. One member of staff told us:

Definitely over the course of the year I can say that compared to previous students who've come in with similar profiles these students have made good progress and certainly seem to be fitting in a lot better. However, whether that's due to Demos or due to all these other things we've put in place, I'm not sure.

One staff participant felt that the pilot had addressed students' 'softer skills' (see below) 'and I suppose that in itself has probably encouraged some academic progress'. Another said of student participants that 'some of them have started taking a bit more responsibility for their own academic success'.

Behaviour

Bad behaviour was one of our key indicators of disengagement from school when we designed Pupil Power (though recognising disengagement manifests in many other ways and need not be a behavioural issue). In fact, participants had a great variety of behaviour records over the course of the pilot year (bearing in

mind that schools themselves used different systems for tracking behaviour). While one in ten – 11 per cent – of targeted pupils did not receive a single behaviour point or have a reported incident, the large majority did, and in two cases selected pupils were permanently excluded over the course of the pilot.

Alongside learning about pupils whose behaviour acted as a barrier to participation in the project in our interviews, we heard some very positive anecdotes about changes in participants' behaviour. For example, in one school, staff felt that participation in Pupil Power had helped make the difference between one year 7 remaining in school rather than being excluded:

I think that if [he] hadn't been on [the pilot], he might not have been here now... I think he'd have been at another [school] because his behaviour was that bad at some points.

Furthermore, staff participants reported that individual students had not only improved their own behaviour but had the potential to be 'a positive influence' (in the words of one staff participant) on others. One student was described as 'developing into a leader' as a result of his participation. This was particularly true in one school, where year 7 and year 9 participants had been working together as a single group:

Even though the four in year 9 were choice students with their own issues and their own disruption, it was interesting to see how they suddenly became the... authoritative [ones] among the year 7s... When the year 7s were being a bit silly... it was the year 9s that said, 'Come on, we need to write this down. Who's going to do what?' so they started to get their head around how things progress, how you get things moving.

Where year 9 students started to tell year 7 students off for being disruptive, staff reflected that this provided an informal, non-confrontational opportunity for staff to encourage the year 9s to think about the effect of their own disruptive behaviour. This links to a theme that emerged from the student interviews, too: for some students, the threat of not being able to participate

in Pupil Power, or not being allowed to progress with their chosen project as part of the pilot, was a good motivation to behave.

Other staff participants reported that students were ‘taking charge’ or ‘taking ownership’ of their behaviour. Often, the examples cited were small but – at least for staff, who knew the students well – significant. One staff participant had observed a change in how a year 7 pupil responded when he made a mistake: ‘I think now if he makes a mistake he actually realises, and he realises what a lot of things he’s got to lose.’ This illustrates the expectation of there being slow but steady progress relating to behaviour – including setbacks:

His needs are known to a number of different parts of the school, so I wouldn't have expected something to happen immediately and then stay happening forever. I think there are going to be periods where he goes back – periods where he's good, periods where, like, he regresses, and then eventually we'll get somewhere where something's happening.

These quotes perhaps illustrate the difference between a wholesale change in behaviour (of the kind that would ‘show up’ in behaviour data), and a smaller change in *attitude*, which might be seen as the first step towards a measurable change in behaviour, perhaps also a sign of ‘resilience’ – being able to respond to mistakes appropriately.

Data we gathered from schools for all selected pupils on behaviour showed there had been the following changes during the pilot study:

- There was an improvement in the number of reported behaviour incidents between the autumn and summer terms for 45 per cent of selected pupils; there was a negative change for 30 per cent.
- The proportion of selected pupils who said they get into trouble at school often or always decreased by 11 percentage points over the pilot, from 37 per cent of pupils to 26 per cent.
- The proportion of selected pupils who were considered disruptive in class by teachers decreased by two percentage points, from 53 per cent to 51 per cent.

While there was a negative change in school behaviour data and less positive outcomes in surveys among a greater proportion of the comparison group than the participant group, survey responses show that those in the comparison group were less likely at baseline to report getting into trouble at school than the participant group, and were less likely to be thought disruptive by their teachers.

Attendance and punctuality

Truancy does not appear to have been a substantial issue for the vast majority of students selected to take part in the pilot – though it was for a small group. Almost a third (31 per cent) of participants had no unauthorised absences during the year in which they were selected to take part. However, 10 per cent of participants had attendance below 85 per cent, which is the official definition of ‘persistent absence’, and 5 per cent of participants missed more than 15 per cent of sessions through unauthorised absences.³⁷

Although baseline data indicated that unauthorised absence was an issue only for a minority of students, we nonetheless monitored change in recorded levels between the autumn and summer terms. A higher rate of term-on-term unauthorised absence is expected, as rates rise in the summer term. This was reflected in the results: we found that the number of unauthorised absences decreased for 13 per cent of participants but increased for 46 per cent. A similar trend was seen in the comparison group.

A more widely relevant outcome measure for our student participants was punctuality. Nearly two-thirds (60 per cent) of participants were late to ten or more morning or afternoon registrations, while only 4 per cent were not late to any. Over the pilot, the number of late registrations between the autumn and summer terms improved for 44 per cent of participants, while it worsened for 37 per cent. Results from the comparison group indicated their punctuality was better overall during the pilot, with a higher proportion not being late to any sessions – though in this context similar trends were observed when figures for the different terms were compared.

Confidence and soft skills

While we were interested in measuring changes on the key disengagement indicators above, we also wanted to examine what other changes were observed in pupils over the course of the pilot, both expected – notably in participants’ social and emotional skills given the nature of the activities and projects they were involved in – and unexpected.

When interviewed, several students spoke about being more ‘involved’ or ‘more active’ in school because of the pilot. The words ‘confidence’ and ‘skills’ came up, and some students said they were having more interactions with people:

[It’s helped with] most things – like my social skills, like interacting with other people.

I think I’ve got better with my anger, and like helping out with people.

At least one student had felt uncomfortable working with others she didn’t know at first:

Some people you don’t really know them in group; it’s a bit awkward.

Another grew in confidence, and by the end of the pilot had begun putting his name forward to help with other things in school, for example a transition day for current year 6s.

Related to this, one outcome which students reported was a change in the ability to communicate ideas and feelings:

I have more confidence talking to people and bringing my ideas out. If I want to say something, I’ll just say it now.

It’s helped me explain stuff better... It’s useful for when you discuss stuff with teachers.

[It’s helped me] to speak to other people... teachers. ’Cos you speak differently with friends to how you do with teachers.

There were overlaps between the impacts identified by students and by staff. While staff participants felt the pilot’s

impact depended on the student in question, they reported a fairly wide range of positive impacts for those students who engaged with the project, including in their confidence and independence. Staff described individual students as, variously, ‘more mature’, ‘more engaged’, ‘more focused’ and more capable of ‘independent thought’.

The next chapter discusses how it was a real challenge for some student participants simply to remember appointments and organise their time. Staff at one school reported how impressed they had been when one such student had told them he could not come to the session that week because he had a drama assessment. They attributed this to his participation in the pilot.

Self-esteem

Of course, many of these issues to do with confidence and social and emotional skills can be related to participants’ self-esteem – which is one of the indicators we sought to capture changes on in our surveys. While a range of positive changes emerged in our interviews about participants’ confidence, discussed above, in our surveys of all participants we found small negative changes on the majority of self-esteem measures over the course of the pilot. However, these negative changes were noticed to a greater extent in the comparison group (and while the comparison is limited, the groups started from similar positions on these questions).

For the most part, selected pupils started from strong baseline positions on the self-esteem measures – see chapter 2. The proportion of selected pupils saying they are basically happy with who they are decreased from 92 per cent of pupils to 88 per cent (a four percentage point decrease); the proportion who said they can do well if they try decreased from 94 per cent to 92 per cent (a two percentage point decrease); and the proportion who said if they fail at something once they give up increased from 37 per cent to 40 per cent (an increase of three percentage points). Conversely, the proportion of selected pupils who said they were ‘hard on themselves sometimes’ improved, decreasing from 46 per cent to 44 per cent (by two percentage points). Note that

given the small sample sizes behind these small percentage point changes, it would be sensible to summarise the findings as showing ‘little to no change’.

Motivation

One of the key questions we were hoping to answer through this pilot is whether coproduction can help to boost the motivation of those who have lost interest in school or are at risk of doing so, and ascertain whether this leads to meaningful changes in attainment, behaviour, and so on.

Some staff thought the mere fact of having been selected to take part in something was motivating for some of the pupils:

I think there's a certain amount of status and a lot of kudos for them that they're in this group.

[A] lot of the problem is caused [by] attention-seeking... [Pupil Power] fills that gap, it ticks that box.

Staff participants felt that the pilot had been motivating for some students because it had given them a sense of value in the school community – a sense that people were interested in what they thought and were capable of contributing to the school. The following quotes demonstrate this:

[They] have really enjoyed people just asking them what they think, just to talk, because I don't think they get that much feedback from people in general. I think just being asked their opinion was something that was new for them.

[It was beneficial], just realising that small changes they make can have bigger effects on the way people treat them.

The process of them being asked and engaged with their own learning has been valuable for them.

I think they have realised that actually people do listen to them.

It really did have an impact on the kids' morale in that they actually [did] something and finished it and they actually [saw] an impact.

However, if being listened to was motivating for students, we found that *not* being listened to was demotivating. A staff participant in one school, where students came up with an idea and the school senior leadership staff were slow to respond, explained that this had jeopardised students' engagement with the project as a whole:

They seemed to get quite excited about it, and then they got frustrated because it hasn't happened yet.

While several of the participating pupils were motivated by the projects they were undertaking, it is not clear the extent to which the pilot had an effect on motivation in general at school (for example, the extent to which pupils liked being at school, and were interested in lessons). Our baseline and post-intervention student surveys showed that, in general, motivation in school actually decreased on the majority of our measures over the relevant pilot year for both pupils targeted by the intervention and the comparison group. For example, the proportion of participants who said they like being at school decreased by 11 percentage points, from 72 per cent of pupils to 61 per cent; while the proportion of participants who said they found lessons interesting often or always decreased by 11 percentage points, from 28 per cent of pupils to 17 per cent. (The comparison group started from substantially more positive baseline positions – see appendix C.)

Interestingly, the teacher surveys showed they had a slightly more positive view of selected pupils' motivation. For example, there was an 8 percentage point increase in the proportion of targeted pupils staff considered to be easily motivated by teachers, from 36 per cent to 43 per cent. There was also a 2 percentage point increase in the proportion of participants considered to be interested in school by teachers, from 60 per cent to 62 per cent of pupils – though this is a small sample so represents little to no change.

Staff–student relationships

Central to coproduction is a shift in the relationship between the provider of services and the user of services – in our context teachers and pupils. We wanted to know what the pilot’s impact had been on these relationships.

Interviews with staff and student participants revealed several examples of relationships established or improved between individual staff and between students through coproduction. These are comments students made of the staff involved in the project:

[She has helped me] a lot; she makes sure I have stuff to do and that I'm included.

She changed her opinion of me in a good way.

I'm not as bad as I used to be and can be trusted more.

One student reported that participation had ‘definitely’ improved his relationship with teachers. Previously he felt that teachers always blamed him for trouble in class, whereas now ‘they give me a chance – look into it more, without assuming it’s me’.

Another reflected that the project had helped to build more trust:

I think it has gone towards making me more relaxed with teachers and stuff. The teachers I've got involved with, it's made me trust them a bit more.

Some of the staff we interviewed echoed this theme of trust, saying of particular pupils:

She's become more open in the way that she shares things with me about what she thinks needs to change.

I think he knows that we do have faith in him, and possibly through the Demos sessions we've been able to build up that rapport.

My relationship especially with [one student], who's been quite reluctant in the first year I was her form tutor, has become a lot better; she'll come for a chat now.

I would say that it's definitely helped me develop a positive relationship with him, and he's a tough pupil and not a lot of teachers do have a positive relationship with him.

More generally, staff felt that the pilot was beneficial insofar as it gave opportunities for positive interactions outside lessons:

It has given them a platform to be able to speak to us a bit more.

Definitely I feel I have developed more of a rapport with the students during this time than with them in a normal lesson.

This facilitates that chance to speak to a group of students in a positive light.

At one school, where participating staff were in non-teaching roles, these staff particularly welcomed the opportunity to interact with the students in a way they would not have otherwise:

We sometimes say as the head of year it's a struggle sometimes because... we don't get that chance for the nice little bit in the middle; it's either 'you're doing something wrong' or 'you're doing something great'.

Indeed, the pilot offered all participants – students and staff – the opportunity to be seen differently, challenging unhelpful fixed roles of 'strict teacher' or 'naughty student'. One of the teachers commented:

They see me more as, you know, a person, now, as opposed to just a teacher.

And a student said:

When I came to school I had a bad reputation, but people have been seeing the right side of me.

It is of course no surprise that the relationship between staff and pupils was a key success factor in each of the schools for the project. In some instances, prior familiarity and rapport was helpful in building momentum behind the project; in others, students preferred having a new member of staff, as one teacher explained:

I think me meeting him at the start of this with him never being one of my pupils and me never teaching him – we had this fresh sort of thing and the new relationship between the two of us which was strictly this, whereas I think [for the two students whom] I taught for the past year, one thing [one of them] said was, ‘I know you too well, you know me too well. I don’t want you to have this side of me as well; it’s too private.’

We found that during the inception stage some difficulties emerged in getting the fit between staff and pupils right, and in one case, a staff member was replaced. We discuss this further in the next chapter.

Our student and staff surveys found that for all selected pupils there were small (to no) changes on measures for positive student–staff relationships. Most notably, there was a 9 percentage point increase in the proportion of students who felt they get on well with teachers often or always, from 43 per cent of participants to 53 per cent; while there was a 2 percentage point increase in the proportion who said teachers listen to their opinions often or always. In the teacher surveys we found a two per cent decrease in the proportion of students thought to have a good relationship with their teacher, from 83 per cent to 79 per cent. The comparison group scored higher at baseline but there were negative changes (some substantial) on each of these items.

Staff

Impressions

The project team believed that almost all of the staff involved across the two years of the pilot understood and recognised the value in the coproduction approach. The following quotes illustrate this well:

They came out with some fantastic ideas, but sometimes in class they just come out with it the wrong way.

I've always said that if you ever let someone get involved in creating something, they won't go and destroy it because they've put all that heart into it and creating it. It's like community parks round here and all that. If you send a council in to put all the bedding plants in, kids will still go and dig them up if they want. But if you get kids involved in it and their families and friends, to put them in, they'd go, 'Oh, that's ours!' and that's similar to what they've done here.

I think the best thing about the project is that what you're basically saying to these students [is] that we're interested in what you've got to say – you've got useful things to say and important things to say and we're going to listen to them.

A couple of staff remarked that this sort of approach was in line with the general direction of pedagogy (and policy):

Because that's the way that pedagogy is moving at the moment... less to do with individual tasks and knowledge and more to do with, sort of, taking it on yourself to find things out and to play with information and come up with ideas yourself.

I think the idea of coproduction is something that's coming. I think it's going to be used in education in some way.

In practice, however, some staff felt they had needed to compromise on the degree of choice and freedom they gave to participating students. On one occasion, this was because of constraints imposed by the senior leadership team, but more frequently it was because of a feeling that little or nothing would be achieved (at least within the time-frame) without more direction from staff.

For example, one staff participant thought that the best approach was to

come up with projects and see if they'll engage with it... [So say] 'This is what we're going to do', and then get them to take that project in different directions, as opposed to [saying], 'Oh, what do you want to do?' – because I think it would, from the start, get more focuses.

Another staff participant was adamant about maintaining fidelity to the coproduction approach but encountered substantial difficulty in doing so:

[They came up] with their own idea; they wanted to... open a new youth club. So the idea was totally theirs, but then they really struggled; they didn't know where to go next with it... I was heavily prompting them all the time – 'So why do you want a youth club?' They couldn't come up with the answers so I was literally having to take really tiny steps with them and really prod them along and then they had to follow a procedure of doing a student survey and having meetings, but I found it was me that was creating everything and putting in more effort so it was kind of taking up that lesson I'd put aside and then some more time extra as well because they just [weren't] taking the initiative... to actually do it themselves and when they [were] the standard was poor so it wasn't something we could actually put out into the school.

Other staff said that when they allowed students to arrange things, they occasionally had to ensure students did so in a fair, organised way – for example, having a fair rationale for selecting who should be involved in a football tournament, instead of just choosing their own friends.

Professional development

In interviews the research team asked staff participants about the effect of the pilot on them in practical terms, and from the perspective of their professional development.

It was beyond doubt that participating in this pilot had placed significant demands on staff, who had not only to find the time to meet students and support them with their chosen projects, but also to coordinate data returns to Demos as part

of the evaluation. One staff participant described being ‘swamped’, and another spoke of ‘moments of being demoralised’. One explained:

I found it quite hard to meet the demands of the weekly meetings... I found that quite difficult on top of the pressures already set by the school.

This applied to staff participants with and without teaching responsibilities, and the situation was generally the same, or not improved, in the second year. In year 2, some participants who had been in training or newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in year 1 acquired busier timetables and more responsibilities, while one school which used pastoral staff to deliver the programme was coping with a reduction in staff numbers.

Nevertheless, the majority of staff – including those who found participation the most difficult – felt that they had benefited from the pilot. They reported personal outcomes such as greater ‘awareness and responsiveness to pupils’. The following quotes illustrate this:

I’m more willing to listen to students and what they’ve got to say.

I think it’s caused me to evaluate the extent to which I use pupil voice in my lessons. So I think sometimes – a lot of times, possibly – when schools do pupil voice, then it might be a sort of box-ticking exercise in ‘Are you doing this?’ ‘Yeah, well they’ve got a student magazine’, and stuff. And to really get them involved in changing things is quite a powerful tool if used correctly.

One NQT participant felt the programme had allowed him to put into practice some methods he had been learning but might not have had the opportunity to practise in the classroom – for example coaching and mentoring:

I did an NQT course this year... where we got introduced to the idea of coaching in tangent to this, or in parallel to this, and I think that’d be... what I’d take home from [Pupil Power] the most, because I think... you can use it for any other situation.

Another staff participant said:

It's been one of my first opportunities to be sort of a mentor to the students so I think I've built skills in that way, just sort of being able to do one-to-one or small groups as opposed to a full class, and how that's different to teaching really. So I've developed in that way.

Other staff identified different skills that they had developed through helping students to undertake projects in school. One said:

I've had to deal with a different side of things... like going to meet the corporate services manager, I would never have had to do that with any of my other group interventions... doing a whole-school survey – I've never had to do that before. So I've actually done things that I've never had to do before within my role so definitely it's helped with my professional development.

The wider school

Finally, we were also interested to gauge what impact (if any) the pilot had had on the school as a whole. Staff participants in all four schools reported that the pilot had had limited impact, or none at all, at this level. A typical response was 'No; I think it's too small to have done that.'

However, one staff participant questioned whether the lack of whole-school impact mattered:

I don't think it is something that needs to be, like, every single person in the school needs to know about it, and I think having it like that maybe would scare some of the kids off a bit.

Where school staff other than those directly involved in the pilot were aware of it, this was usually as a consequence of their being asked to fill in surveys as part of the evaluation, or to allow students to come out of class to attend sessions. Occasionally, projects that students were completing as part of Pupil Power were visible around the school – as, for example, the gardening

project at the school in Birmingham – which raised awareness. In the main, both staff and student participants reported that they would have preferred more involvement from people and awareness across the school. This speaks to the fourth principle of coproduction (see introduction) – networks – and appears to have been one of the more difficult aspects of the pilot to implement.

5 Process

This project was a formative evaluation, so the research team sought feedback not only on outcomes (see previous chapter) but also on the process. The feedback we gathered on this allowed us to adapt the approach (particularly between year 1 and year 2 of the pilot study), but also provides important data about the factors that might make the project successful if continued in the same schools, rolled out to more students, or adopted in different schools.

The operating context

It is worth reiterating that the four participating schools provided four very different operating contexts for the pilot – not just in the geographical location and demographic makeup of their students (see chapter 1), but also in the character and recent history of the schools. Only one school had enjoyed relative stability over the past several years, while the other three were experiencing a more or less recent turnaround. Each set of circumstances brought its own practical challenges and affected the way the pilot was seen by participating pupils and staff.

By way of example, at one school a staff participant observed:

Apart from sport, this school doesn't really have an ethos of after-school, extracurricular activities. It's not normal for the kids to be staying behind.

This was a barrier to student participation as the senior leadership team had ruled that Pupil Power sessions could only take place outside lesson time, and made it difficult to overcome the perception among students that participation in Pupil Power was a punishment for bad behaviour.

In general, participating schools varied in their openness to extracurricular interventions taking place during school time. While one school had adopted a policy of focusing on extracurricular and behavioural interventions for students whose attainment was below the expected level (and saw Pupil Power as a neat fit within this framework), at another school participating staff felt that the focus of interventions was squarely on attainment within the core curriculum, at the expense of developing softer skills. For example, at the first school a staff participant told us:

When they get to GCSE a lot of the teachers are saying they're just not GCSE ready and we took the decision on that and... basically it was a lot more useful for them to have these behaviour and literacy and other sorts of interventions to boost them up to the standards that are acceptable or expected for their age range. Then, when they get to GCSE they're ready rather than putting them in lessons where to be honest if you're under a level 4c for English, reading and writing it's going to be very difficult for you to access a key stage 3 curriculum, even with differentiation in place.

Compared to this, at the second school a member of staff commented,

The type of projects that don't fall into the English, maths and science categories we don't seem to do any more.

Some staff reflected on the readiness of the school to take on additional projects and interventions. One staff participant felt that it might have been too early on in her school's journey to improvement for the pilot to really have a substantial impact:

Perhaps we're not the right school to have tried it in, because we've been through so many emotions and so much disengagement all over the school over the last couple of years and we're still now trying to get it together.

In another school, however, a staff participant felt that the pilot was a good opportunity to challenge persistent negative attitudes towards the school:

Because you get that used to everybody looking down on our [school] for whatever reason it might be – they might not be in the multi-million pound academy round here, or it might be the fact that people still tend to point the finger at them, or [the fact that] we're in the particularly deprived area of [the region]. I think when anything comes across where they're given the opportunity, people do actually go, 'Well, actually...' and it makes them sit back and think that they are as clever or as bright as any kid in [the region], you've just got to give them the chance.

At a third school, the project Pupil Power was seen as typical of the sort of intervention that had been put in place as part of the school's improvement plan. The principal said:

Really this is quite typical of the type of work we do, so it's not standing out... I think, in the early days, the kind of behaviour, attitudes and commitment that these kids have shown would have been not the norm, and it would have stood out. Now their attitudes are very much the norm.

Selection of students

Perhaps the aspect of 'process' that was of greatest concern to staff participants was the selection of students.

More than one staff participant felt that participating students had been chosen 'too quickly' – particularly year 7s, where decisions about who should participate were based largely on (often inadequate) data passed on from their primary school, or initial staff impressions in the first couple of weeks of the year. To help with this, in the second year of the pilot, we allowed one school to select a 'shortlist' of year 7s at the start of the year, and decide on four of them after the October half term.

Several staff responsible for delivering the pilot expressed regret that they had not been involved in the original selection of students, and suggested that if they had been involved in this there might have been better outcomes. For example, one said:

I would on reflection say I could've said [student A] probably wouldn't engage, but I knew [student B] would, so although his behaviour was borderline I knew he'd engage.

Staff at the different schools, and even within the same school, had starkly divided opinions about whether or not it was good to target the most disengaged students. One staff participant explained how, despite the practical difficulty of implementing the project with a very disengaged group, he still believed the right students had been chosen:

Because what's the point of trying to engage students [who] are already engaged? I think if we're going to pick students and really focus on engagement those were the four students whom we should have picked from year 9... I think it's more valuable to pick students whom you know are disengaged and [where] it's a gamble as to whether they're going to get involved in the project.

The same staff member said, in the second year:

In terms of selection of students for this group to see if it would work I think it was bang on. I think the students were certainly ones [who] were at risk of disengagement. In previous years perhaps they would have gone away and been disengaged, however this year they seem to have made a lot more progress. They seem to enjoy coming to school. Whether that's due to Demos or due to these other interventions being put in place I'm not sure. But I certainly think they were the right students to be picked for this intervention.

Another staff member commented that these were the right students to choose because 'no one ever tries it with them', and they have things to offer:

It's given us the insight that they do need a voice, the students do need a voice, all students need a voice, and yes we do have the school council and we do have the prefects and so they've got a voice but these students need a voice as well.

By contrast, we heard the following arguments in favour of a different selection of students:

I think those boys... I think they were maybe too far past – not to the point of no return, but... they're really, really stubborn boys and I think we know them well enough to know that maybe they wouldn't have reacted well to this sort of thing.

[Had the school selected the higher ability students] the programme may have taken off a bit easier because I think they would have paid more attention and got involved and gone off and [taken] their own initiative to do things outside of the classroom.

Indeed, staff participants made several suggestions regarding the sort of students who would have benefited most (although it should be noted that these suggestions were not always accompanied by ideas for how these students might have been practically identified at the beginning of the year):

Maybe pupils who have the chance to sort of slip under the radar and maybe be forgotten about.

Maybe pupils who seem to be trying really hard but just aren't quite getting anywhere.

One staff member suggested that the selection should have been based on an assessment of students' 'personalities and their data, as well as in terms of how much they'd engage with the project'.

Some staff saw the potential to target students who, because of their popularity, would be able to get others involved:

If you won them over... if we had a more carefully structured scheme in place, then you could make more impact because you've got those kids who are the sort of popular... maybe not popular, but the more well-known pupils in the year who can make more influence over other people... You want to have a small group who then goes and incorporates other pupils when needed, like a freelance help.

Several staff would have liked to explore a more mixed group (on several different dimensions):

Perhaps a mixed [ability] group would be beneficial because then they may see there are students doing that so they'd kind of follow their lead.

I'd have chosen perhaps a few more outgoing [children]... Even if you just had a couple of strong characters in there. Perhaps even sixth formers, or a couple of prefects, to help guide them, and to help do a bit of the background work.

We asked students during our interviews what types of students would be well suited to Pupil Power if it was continued into the following year – whether loud or quiet, people who find lessons easy or difficult, people who get in trouble a lot or who do not, about the gender balance, and so on. We generally found students also agreed on more diversity on each of these being beneficial.

Selection of staff

As explained in chapter 1, we originally envisaged that eight teaching staff would receive coproduction training and work with two different cohorts of students over the two years of the pilot. In practice, given a combination of practical considerations and the school leadership teams' preferences, there was a roughly equal mix of teaching and non-teaching staff delivering the pilot. One school exclusively used teaching staff in both years, and one school exclusively used non-teaching staff. Non-teaching staff included heads of year, support staff and those in pastoral roles. There were some staffing changes between years, and a total of 15 staff took part.

Almost all of the teaching staff involved were either current candidates for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or NQTs. Some were TeachFirst participants. This suggests that participation in the pilot was viewed as a good opportunity for professional development – and this was supported by evidence from interviews with participating staff and school senior leaders

– but was also driven by their having slightly lighter timetables than more established staff. Findings from our formative evaluation suggested three factors informed staff selection that also affected the success of the pilot:

- *Time and availability*: Non-teaching staff generally had more availability and flexibility than teaching staff.
- *Seniority*: Supporting students to action their chosen projects as part of Pupil Power frequently required participating staff to negotiate with others in school – for example, obtaining permission to do or use things, accessing resources, or asking for help. The relative role and position of staff within the school affected their ability to do this, with teaching staff generally finding it easier than non-teaching staff.
- *Relationship with students*: While some teaching staff built valuable relationships with participating students, in general relationships were more easily established with non-teaching staff – perhaps because of the difficulty for students of overcoming established attitudes towards those with a teaching role.

For schools choosing between teaching and non-teaching staff, there was a trade-off between these factors.

As part of the evaluation, the research team observed a number of coproduction sessions in each school. As attested by the quotes from students and staff in the previous chapter, we saw ample evidence of strong rapport and positive relationships being established. Indeed, establishing these relationships from the outset appeared to be crucial to success; one school was forced to rethink its selection of staff when the students refused to work with the member of staff who had initially been selected. In general, our observations suggested that staff who built the best (and most truly coproductive) relationships were energetic, encouraged lots of peer-to-peer interaction and activities in the group settings, and set clear ‘next steps’ for participants following each session. Where staff approached the pilot as a way of helping students raise their attainment or address their behaviour (rather than a way of helping them identify and make positive changes to their learning generally, or to the wider

school community), we found they were less likely to establish a good working relationship.

Staff support

Some staff reported that they had not felt especially well supported within school to implement the pilot – a point related to ‘whole-school’ awareness or impact, discussed at the end of the previous chapter.

Some participants pointed to a lack of supportive structure for the pilot *within the school*. For instance, one felt that, as well as rewards, there should perhaps have been some kind of sanction for non-attendance, or at least concrete expectations of what students would contribute and by when.

One staff participant suggested there should be a more senior staff member involved in the delivery:

Just one more senior member of staff, perhaps... someone who has a bit more pull in the school... instead of us, we have to go through five people before it's even got to someone vaguely senior.

Another suggested that ‘pilot coordinator’ should have been a named job role.

Some staff participants fed back to us that they would have liked more guidance from the research team about what, practically, to *do* in sessions – at least at the beginning of each year. While we provided opening coproduction exercises for staff to use with pupils, it was a conscious decision to then hand over the reins without too much interference. In places momentum built very quickly around projects, while in others it did not. One staff participant commented that the project felt ‘open-ended; there was no real pathway’. Another was somewhere in the middle, saying:

I think at first I was a bit, like, taken aback by the level of freedom I had as to what to do in the meetings, but then once I thought... just sat back and thought about it for a minute, it kind of came quite naturally to be able to put them together.

Other practicalities

In the main, the barriers to implementing the pilot were overwhelmingly practical ones, as noted below.

Scheduling

Scheduling was difficult in all four schools because of staff and student timetables – and particularly where student participants were already subject to a number of interventions. For example, one staff participant said:

It's been quite hard to get a couple of them into the Pupil Power project because there's always crossover with all the other interventions they're doing, so it's hard to coordinate between myself and the SEN department or the behaviour department as to when I can take the students.

One staff member described a particular student:

He was withdrawn [from lessons] for... ten hours a week for literacy. He was also withdrawn... a further five hours a week by myself in the behaviour intervention, so that's a total of 15 hours a week he was being withdrawn from lessons for... He was hardly in his lessons, really, when you think about it like that.

In some schools, even relying on students to remember that they had a session was a significant barrier.

Whether sessions should take place during or outside lesson time

The question of whether sessions should take place during or outside lesson time was a fraught one, which required negotiation with senior leaders. Both approaches had their pros and cons. On the one hand, we heard concerns expressed that some students were motivated by missing lessons, and that this could be 'counterproductive'. One staff participant said:

If it was down to my year 7s, if it wasn't in the middle of maths or science or English, then I'd think that they would struggle to come together.

As our interviews with students made clear, though, missing lessons cut both ways – there were some lessons students were reluctant to miss because they enjoyed them, and others where they felt it was easy to get behind.

On the other hand, some staff suggested that so long as the same lessons were not being missed each week, a positive space such as that provided by Pupil Power could be beneficial to learning. Furthermore, staff felt that it was unhelpful and not in keeping with the ethos of the pilot to ask students to give up their own time:

It was like we weren't giving anything to them, but we're taking this time off them.

A happier medium was found where projects gathered momentum and students became more willing to give up their own time. One participating staff member said:

The more and more the year 9s got into it, the more they were quite happy to accept that.

The set-up of the pilot and evaluation taking longer than expected

The set-up (in both years, but particularly year 1) of the entire pilot and evaluation took longer than all parties (research team and schools) had expected. This impacted on the time-frame in which sessions could take place – and consequently on what student projects could be achieved and what progress could be made to student outcomes within the year. Staff participants commented:

I feel like we're just getting into the groove of it now... I feel like we're ready to start our project and we've just run out of time.

It's not come on in leaps and bounds like I'd like it to, but... every time [they would run it] a little bit more.

Processes rarely put in place for effective internal evaluation

In two of the four schools, the Pupil Power pilot was run as one of a suite of interventions (alongside others for literacy, behaviour, and so on). Where this was the case, staff delivering interventions were accustomed to being accountable to the school for demonstrating quantifiable ‘value added’ by these interventions – especially where they involved taking students out of lessons. While we asked staff participants to develop regular monitoring systems for the sessions, they did not take place regularly nor were they connected effectively with wider reporting systems in the school. The lack of a structure to measure outcomes affected how the project was seen by staff and senior leaders in these schools.

However, there were some very positive examples of evaluation processes being put in place. For example, one member of staff working one-to-one with students made a point of writing everything down. She produced a record of what she and a student had discussed, went through it with the student at the end, and asked the student to sign it.

Individual vs group sessions

One staff member found that individual sessions (at least in addition to group sessions) worked well with year 7 students, who were liable to be ‘silly’ in a group. Some (but not all) students were shy to speak in front of one another. At one school, staff participants suggested that they ‘should have concentrated more on team-building to start with, to get them all together as a group’. In two of the groups, girls whom staff felt might otherwise have engaged with the project were reportedly ‘put off’ by the fact the rest of the group were boys.

In some schools, some students in a group were put off participating because they did not like the activity the others were engaging in. This was more likely to be the case where the activity was not jointly decided on by the students, but was set by the member of staff (see section below). Again, this might be a further factor preventing girls from taking part in groups where most participants were boys.

Suggested improvements

Staff participants had a number of suggestions for how the pilot might be improved:

- Keep the first cohort of students on as participants in the second year.
- Run the project from January to July – especially to address the issue of selection of year 7s.
- Secure commitment from the senior leadership staff to help staff build dedicated time for the pilot into their timetable.
- Implement a whole-school approach – not just involving more students in the pilot, but encouraging a wholesale change in ethos: ‘acceptance on a wider scale by adults that [demotivated students have] got something to say and we actually do need to listen and do something about it’.
- Give students more opportunity to ‘showcase’ what they have done within school.
- Introduce better ‘branding’ of the project to secure engagement early on and perhaps give the project a clearer identity for students who might be involved in a lot of interventions (‘it’s just a perception thing’).
- Increase the involvement of parents and the wider community.

Staff also felt that more information could have been provided by Demos about approaches taken at other schools. We established an online forum for schools to share practice, but while several staff interviewees maintained that the forum was a good idea, they thought it had come too late in the year and few exchanges were made.

Conclusion

This report began by setting out the challenge of student disengagement and a potential solution that Demos set out to test: coproduction.

We briefly reviewed the existing evidence on disengagement – its causes and symptoms, and what helps to address it. We introduced the concept of coproduction, and its four core components of ‘treating people as assets’, ‘valuing work differently’, ‘promoting reciprocity’ and ‘building social networks’. Using evidence of the impact of coproduction in health and social care, we outlined our hypothesis that a similar approach could be used to address educational disengagement. Over the two academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15, we conducted a small scale pilot in four secondary schools in England in order to test this hypothesis, targeting pupils who were either disengaged or at risk of disengagement.

We carried out a concurrent, formative evaluation of the pilot. The previous two chapters outlined our findings. Chapter 4 discussed the impact the pilot had on participating students’ outcomes (their attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance, and self-esteem and motivation), on staff, and on the wider school community. The focus of chapter 5 was on the process of implementing the pilot, including success factors and challenges in implementing coproduction common to, and different across, our four school contexts.

In concluding, we focus on three key areas:

- the extent to which what we saw in this pilot was coproduction (how well the concept was realised), identifying the limitations that applied in different contexts, and what opportunities might have been underexploited

- what success factors we identified for practitioners interested in implementing or developing the approach
- what we are able to say about the usefulness of coproduction as a tool for tackling educational disengagement in a secondary school setting

How well coproduction was implemented

At the beginning of the pilot we outlined an approach to coproduction that would fit within the general operating contexts of secondary schools in England, rather than – for example – demanding a radical overhaul of the school curriculum, or the organisation of the school day, as seen in some international models of coproduction in education.

We found that staff participating in the pilot readily understood the ideas behind coproduction (as did students) and that it was an appealing concept: staff could relate it to current practice in their schools, while recognising the newness of some of the principles and working practices, especially in the context of disengagement.

In practice, we saw a variety of approaches to implementing coproduction – for better and worse. Through the two pilot years, some participating staff remained clearly wedded to the principles we outlined in training in their work with pupils, while others admitted to making sacrifices in the interest of getting things done (for example, doing things themselves that they could have encouraged students to do).

It is worthwhile reflecting on the four key principles of coproduction we outlined at the start of this report, as a way of understanding how far what we saw could be called coproduction.

People are assets

Coproduction is student voice but, as we explained, it is more than voice. Students who benefited from Pupil Power did more than tell staff that they were unhappy about certain things in school: they were treated as assets in designing

solutions. More than this, staff acted as facilitators for student action, encouraging them to understand the process of making changes happen in school, and to make those changes themselves.

In our research for this report we found that several pupils saw Pupil Power as a good opportunity to articulate their strengths, experiences and interests, and in the project-based sessions use those attributes to make a positive difference to school. Staff commented that being a part of the project had a certain kudos for some of the pupils, who might otherwise have been identified simply by their troubling behaviour.

Indeed, ‘people as assets’ was perhaps the best realised of the four principles, and most clearly articulated by participants – staff and pupils. Where this tended to come unstuck was with those ‘harder to reach’ pupils who disengaged from the pilot early on and who were more reticent about sharing their ideas and experiences. Unsurprisingly, these pupils attended less frequently. Also unsurprisingly, sessions poorly received by pupils became more punitive and focused on what is lacking in students, rather than what they have to offer as assets to the school.

Valuing work differently

In the main, the project-based sessions offered an opportunity for pupils to focus on, and be recognised for, non-academic achievements in school – and several staff consciously pushed academic performance into the background. Perhaps one of the most encouraging findings from our interviews with students and staff was that students felt a higher sense of value in the school community following participation in the project. In the Birmingham school, this was through having been visible doing something worthwhile: raising money through a tombola, and redesigning the school garden.

In session observations, we saw matters become more fractious when the focus switched to becoming more about grades and falling behind academically. This was demotivating for participating pupils, and in one case led to staff replacement.

Reciprocity

We identified reciprocity in the introduction as perhaps one of the hardest of the coproduction principles to realise within schools (traditionally set up with very clear distinctions between the roles and responsibilities of teachers and pupils).

Students who benefited from Pupil Power took on new responsibilities in school, including doing things for other pupils and the wider school community – things that might ordinarily have fallen to school staff to do. On the one hand this was true of managing projects – such as a lunchtime football club in Grimsby – and on the other was at the level of individual tasks – for example, writing letters to the head teacher, or speaking to school staff to have something change in school (such as seating plans).

Reciprocity, however, was the principle where there was most slippage following good starting intentions, with staff members themselves admitting to doing things that they thought pupils could have done.

Building social networks

Coproduction recognises the importance of using – and building on – a person's social capital. In schools this applies on many levels: other pupils, non-participating teachers at the school, parents and other adults, and the wider networks of the school (for example, local business partnerships).

We found several peer relationships were developed through Pupil Power, and pupils who engaged noted that team-working – often with new people who were not already friends – was an aspect they enjoyed. Insofar as projects connected students to different people in the school community who they would not have otherwise had much to do with, networks were improved.

However, participating staff thought that the use of wider networks beyond the school – for example local businesses – to create opportunities for students could have been improved. If parents, siblings and friends had been involved, the group-based projects could have been driven in new and interesting directions, driven by what the students chose to put into action.

Success factors in implementing coproduction methods in schools

Below we summarise some of the key issues and related success factors we found through conducting the pilot.

Pupil selection

Many participating staff believed that the success of Pupil Power rested on the selection of students. All staff we spoke to thought that the underlying principles of the pilot were the right ones, and that using coproduction as a means to tackle disengagement made sense. However, some staff felt pupils were ‘too disengaged’ for the intervention to be effective. In general, our evaluation found opinion was divided among participant staff about whether more or less disengaged students should have been selected.

The pilot was always intended to be targeted at those who were disengaged or starting to show signs of disengagement, but not at for those who had the most complex barriers to engagement. However, some of the anecdotes we heard about challenging behaviour in staff interviews, and the permanent exclusion of two participants, suggested that in a small number of cases very challenging pupils had been selected. While some staff were keen to keep working with these pupils – thinking that this was where the greatest impact would be – others felt that students who would more readily take the opportunity presented to them would be a better target.

Strong student–staff relationships

The central staff–student relationship was essential to the successful implementation of coproduction; where the fit was right, there were successful outcomes with some of the more challenging pupils. In our pilot we observed both very positive examples of these relationships, built on high levels of trust, usually with staff who brought high energy and structure to the sessions, and who were more faithful to principles of coproduction, and others of relationship breakdown where sessions were seen as boring or punitive by pupils.

We began the project with the intention of training eight teaching members of staff to deliver the pilot over the two years. However, each of the schools chose a range of staff members, teaching and non-teaching (15 in total). Our evaluation found that there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach here: staff were also assets with different strengths, interests and approaches. However, there was a benefit for school timetables where pastoral staff rather than teaching staff led on the project.

Supportive whole-school ethos

Several staff who participated in the pilot reported developing new skills (which some likened to mentoring), through working with pupils in a unique setting. Other staff – and sometimes the same staff – reported that the pilot was incredibly demanding on their time, and we heard them reporting feeling demotivated and stressed.

Many felt that they could have had more support from senior staff for the project, with one recommendation being that there should have been a clearer delivery structure (with, for example, a pilot coordinator).

In general, each of the four schools provided a very different operating context into which this pilot fitted, some of which were more conducive to a pilot such as this than others. Those schools where we were able to relate the pilot to broader school objectives (student voice or behavioural interventions) and individual staff strengths appear to have had more success; in other schools extracurricular interventions were very unusual.

Schools are of course under extreme pressure to show positive outcomes for pupils through the interventions they put in place (notably with the accountability requirements around Pupil Premium spending). This undoubtedly had implications for how our pilot was seen by some staff (as 'just another initiative'). At one school there was a clearer system than in the others for marking the attendance of pupils to sessions, taking photographs and monitoring their progress, which was helpful in this regard.

Supportive school processes

Barriers to coproduction we observed were overwhelmingly practical in nature, and especially to do with timetabling sessions. There was a significant problem with getting students to show up to sessions, and controversy around whether students should be brought out of lessons or not. Some staff felt that it would be counterproductive to do so – as students would fall behind; others thought that a positive space and development opportunity would ultimately help with focus, motivation and learning.

Coproduction as a tool for tackling disengagement

As explained in the introduction, what separates this pilot from the small number of other initiatives modelling coproduction in schools is its specific focus on disengagement. Our pilot programme was targeted at disengaged pupils, and intended as a means of tackling that disengagement, rather than as an opportunity for all pupils to have a voice.

We followed the evidence from other settings. In health and social care contexts, research has shown that people who are disengaged with their care become re-engaged, and report improved outcomes for their health, care and quality of life. We also based our selection of target school years (7 and 9) on evidence of critical windows for addressing disengagement.

The previous chapters show that the pilot was a very positive experience for a small number of students who were enthused by the approach. A range of projects were designed and delivered by students in their schools – such as extracurricular clubs, a gardening project, petitions for a new school uniform – and we saw students actively engaged by staff in setting their own learning goals. However, many other participating pupils did not engage nor benefit in the same way. As a result, the picture painted by the school and survey data for all students is one of the project having fairly insignificant impact.

The answer to the question ‘Is coproduction a useful tool for tackling disengagement?’ from this pilot can only be: ‘It depends.’ Our research suggests that impact depends on a range

of factors: the level of disengagement at baseline, the quality of the central student–teacher relationships, the quality of the peer relationships behind the project-based approaches, the regularity and scheduling of meetings, and a host of other factors.

Primarily, those select students who did benefit from the study found the meetings for Pupil Power motivating. They reported improvements in their soft skills and confidence, and felt more ‘valued’ in the school community. They felt they ‘achieved’ something. All of these views were reinforced by the opinions of their subject teachers and the staff delivering the pilot. Pupils’ relationships with teachers also improved. Unhelpful expectations of ‘naughty student’ or ‘strict teacher’ had been changed.

It is possible that some of these benefits may have contributed, or may in future contribute, to those students’ academic progress, but the nature of the pilot – in duration, and its position alongside other interventions for students – makes this difficult to ascertain.

Some staff believed that giving a small number of students a good opportunity in which they had thrived was enough to make the project worthwhile. However, others felt that the pilot had been too circumscribed in its impact and too demanding in time and effort, and some of the practical barriers in particular had to be overcome to make the project worth pursuing further.

This pilot was a small scale pathfinder rather than a large scale pilot to test a fully formed process. Ultimately, a larger study, building on what we have done, with a bigger sample of students and schools (and taking on board some of the success factors we have outlined in our process evaluation), would be beneficial in order to build a clearer picture of the positive, small-scale impacts we have seen. If implemented correctly, coproduction has the *potential* to tackle disengagement – but this larger scale testing would be required to get a more precise idea of the scale of its impact.

Appendix A Session plan for the initial staff training session

Introduction

The structure of the introduction was as follows:

- welcome and introductions
- structure and aims of today's session
- introduction to Demos
- introduction to the project:
 - tackling educational disengagement through coproduction
 - coproduction as a process used in social care that changes the dynamic between the person delivering a service and the person using it
 - two-year pilot in four schools across the country
 - evaluation measuring impact on different indicators of disengagement (attainment, progress, behaviour, attendance, self-esteem and motivation)
 - *formative* pilot – interested in process as well as outcomes

Session 1 Disengagement

Objective: Teachers can identify what disengagement looks like, and what its effects are, both in the classroom and in their own lives.

Exercise 1 Brainstorming disengagement

Teachers are asked some stimulus questions ('When do *you* disengage?', 'What do you do when you disengage?') to encourage them to brainstorm what disengagement looks like, and what its effects are. Teachers and facilitators then discuss similarities between their own disengagement and pupil disengagement.

Session 2 What is coproduction? ('theory')

Objective: Teachers understand the four core features of coproduction and can identify which features are and are not shared by current initiatives at their school.

Baseline measure: Training session evaluation

Teachers are asked to rate their knowledge of coproduction and their confidence in their ability to be coproducers, on a scale of 1–10 (with 1 being 'no knowledge at all' or 'no confidence at all' and 10 being 'know everything there is to know' or 'absolutely confident'). Teachers are asked what (if anything) they already know about coproduction.

Exercise 2 The four key features of coproduction

Facilitators give a brief presentation on the history and nature of coproduction. Teachers are introduced to the four key features ('assets', 'valuing work differently', 'reciprocity' and 'building networks') of coproduction, with some practical examples of each.

Teachers are asked to give examples of current practice in school that they think are relevant to, or incorporate elements of, coproduction. Examples are discussed one at a time, with facilitators and teachers discussing which one (or more) of the four key features they belong under.

Session 3 Making coproduction happen ('practice')

Objectives: Teachers understand how the theory of coproduction introduced in the last session can be put into practice and are able to generate their own ideas about this.

Teachers are clear about the 'fixed', practical aspects of the pilot and evaluation, and areas where they are expected and encouraged to be flexible and creative.

Discussion: 'fixed' and 'flexible'

Facilitator to explain some of the 'fixed' elements of the pilot, including regular meetings, data recording and collection, and maintaining regular contact with Demos.

Teachers are encouraged to discuss any initial ideas they have for how they might like to explore coproduction with their students.

Exercise 3 Exploring assets

Teachers are asked to write down the kinds of things that they can bring to the process of coproduction. Facilitator to explain why this is important and relevant to coproduction, and to suggest that this exercise may be a useful way of structuring the initial session with students (to bring out strengths and interests).

Session 4 Preparation

Objectives: Teachers are able to reflect on their own experience of coproduction.

Teachers can identify some concrete hopes from the process, as well as anticipate likely challenges. They can suggest strategies to mitigate likely challenges.

Exercise 4 Hopes, fears, expectations and challenges

Teachers are asked to reflect on their hopes and worries for beginning the process with students. As a group, teachers and trainers brainstorm potential challenges and how these could be dealt with.

Conclusion

Objectives: Teachers can identify what they have learned from the session, as well as generate new questions.

Teachers can name some concrete things they will try to do in the first session with pupils, as well as some specific things they will not do.

Teachers are asked for their feedback on the session as well as any questions they may have. ('How would you sum up this session to a colleague?')

Teachers are asked to name three things that they will do in the first session with students and three things that they will avoid.

Facilitators to explain practicalities of the pilot, including recording activities, frequency of visits, point of contact within school).

Training session evaluation: end of session measure

Teachers are asked to rate their knowledge of coproduction and their confidence in their ability to be coproducers, on a scale of 1–10 (with 1 being 'no knowledge at all' or 'no confidence at all' and 10 being 'know everything there is to know' or 'absolutely confident').

Appendix B Characteristics of participants and the comparison group

Table 3 The characteristics of participants in Pupil Power and the comparison group

Teacher surveys		Parti- cipants (%)	Comp- arison group (%)
School	John Whitgift Academy (Grimsby Town)	25	25
	Greenwood Academy (Birmingham)	25	25
	Firth Park Academy (Sheffield)	25	25
	Eastlea Community School (Newham, London)	25	25
Year Group	Year 7	50	50
	Year 9	50	50
Gender	Male	73	70
	Female	27	30
Ethnicity	White	76	79
	Mixed/ Multiple Ethnic Groups	5	2
	Asian/Asian British	10	11
	Black/African/Carribbean/Black British	10	8
	Arab/other ethnic group	0	0
Eligible for Free School Meals	Yes	41	59
	No	59	41
Pupil Premium indicator	Yes	78	70
	No	22	30
Special Educational Needs	Yes	33	33
	No	67	67
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	Yes	13	11
	No	88	89
Attainment Band	Low	27	32
	Middle	66	62
	High	8	7
N		64	64

Appendix C Responses to pupil surveys

Tables 4 and 5 summarise responses to the pupil surveys administered over the pilot. ‘P’ in the tables signifies participant, while ‘C’ signifies comparison group.

Table 4 **The extent to which participants in Pupil Power and the comparison group agreed with statements about school and other matters**

		Pre- survey			Post- survey			Change	N
		Dis- agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Agree (%)	Dis- agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Agree (%)	Change in % agree- ing	
I like being at school	P	28	0	72	39	0	61	-11	54
	C	20	2	78	17	0	83	4	46
I try hard at school	P	7	2	91	13	0	87	-4	55
	C	4	0	96	6	0	94	-2	49
I am achieving my potential at school	P	17	4	79	21	9	70	-9	53
	C	4	2	94	18	2	80	-14	49
Teachers treat me with respect	P	22	0	78	16	2	82	4	55
	C	15	0	85	15	2	83	-2	46
Teachers help me to achieve my goals	P	5	0	95	5	0	95	0	55
	C	2	0	98	8	0	92	-6	49
I am basically happy with who I am	P	8	0	92	10	2	88	-4	52
	C	5	2	93	12	2	86	-7	42
I am too hard on myself sometimes	P	42	12	46	54	2	44	-2	52
	C	48	5	48	38	0	62	14	42
If I try hard I know I can do well	P	4	2	94	8	0	92	-2	51
	C	0	2	98	7	0	93	-5	42
If I fail at something once, I give up	P	58	6	37	58	2	40	4	52
	C	64	0	36	50	0	50	14	42

Table 5 **How often participants in Pupil Power and the comparison group thought the following statements were true about school**

	Pre-survey			Post-survey			Change				
	Never/ rarely (%)	Some- times (%)	Often/ Always (%)	Not sure (%)	Never/ rarely (%)	Some- times (%)	Often/ Always (%)	Not sure (%)	Change in % 'often/ always'	N	
I find lessons interesting	P	25	43	28	4	21	58	17	4	-11	53
	C	16	36	44	4	24	49	27	0	-18	45
I want to come to school	P	17	41	39	4	35	26	37	2	-2	54
	C	11	31	58	0	24	18	58	0	0	45
I get on well with teachers	P	9	43	43	4	15	30	53	2	9	53
	C	7	37	54	2	24	33	43	0	-11	46
Teachers listen to my opinions	P	19	37	41	4	20	35	43	2	2	54
	C	17	28	52	2	20	39	35	7	-17	46
I feel I can make decisions about my education	P	13	26	57	4	13	41	43	4	-15	54
	C	4	17	72	7	24	24	52	0	-20	46
I get into trouble at school	P	30	33	37	0	30	44	26	0	-11	54
	C	46	33	15	7	41	46	13	0	-2	46

Appendix D Responses to teacher surveys

As with student surveys above, 'P' indicates surveys completed by subject teachers about participating students, while 'C' indicates the comparison group.

Table 6 **The extent to which teachers of pupils participating in Pupil Power and those teaching pupils in the comparison group agreed with statements about those students**

		Pre-survey			Post-survey			Change		N
		Dis-agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Agree (%)	Dis-agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Agree (%)	Change in % agreeing		
X pays attention in lessons	P	60	2	38	55	2	43	6	53	
	C	33	3	64	31	5	64	0	39	
X is disruptive in class	P	45	2	53	47	2	51	-2	53	
	C	68	0	32	51	2	46	15	41	
X hands in work on time	P	58	4	38	54	2	44	6	52	
	C	39	5	56	41	2	56	0	41	
X is achieving his/her full potential	P	77	4	19	72	4	25	6	53	
	C	52	2	45	48	5	48	2	42	
X is easily motivated	P	60	4	36	55	2	43	8	53	
	C	38	2	60	48	2	50	-10	42	
X is interested in school	P	32	8	60	26	11	62	2	53	
	C	33	5	62	33	14	52	-10	42	
X has ambition for future	P	23	34	43	19	28	53	9	53	
	C	26	40	33	19	29	52	19	42	
X is likely to do well at school	P	47	15	38	42	6	53	15	53	
	C	30	15	55	33	13	55	0	40	
I have a good relationship with X	P	13	4	83	11	9	79	-4	53	
	C	12	2	86	2	14	83	-2	42	

Notes

- 1 A Ross, *Disengagement from Education among 14–16 Year Olds*, National Centre for Social Research, 2009, <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10620/1/dcsf-rr178.pdf> (accessed 17 Dec 2015). The author's analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England categorises students as follows: 'engaged', 'disengaged from school not education', 'engaged with school not higher education' and 'disengaged'. We have combined the percentages of students identified as disengaged from school but not education with those disengaged (from school and higher education).
- 2 DfE, 'Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England: 2013 to 2014', SFR27/2015, Dept for Education, 30 Jul 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/449433/SFR27_2015_Text.pdf (accessed 17 Dec 2015), pp 3–4.
- 3 Rough estimate based on two sources: 'absence by reason and gender' at: DfE, 'Pupil absence in schools in England: 2013 to 2014: main tables', Dept for Education, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416340/SFR10_2015_Main_tables.ods (accessed 17 Dec 2015), table 2.1, which states that 23.4 per cent of absences were unauthorised in 2013/14; and DfE, 'Pupil absence in schools in England: 2013 to 2014', SFR10/2015, Dept for Education, 26 Mar 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416343/SFR10_2015_text.pdf (accessed 17 Dec 2015), which states that 52 million days were lost to overall absence in 2013/14.

- 4 DfE, 'GCSE and equivalent results in England 2014/15 (provisional)', Dept for Education, 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467605/SFR37_2015_National_Tables.xlsx (accessed 16 Dec 2015), table 1c.
- 5 House of Commons Library, 'NEET: young people not in education, employment or training', research briefing, 19 Nov 2015, <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SNO6705> (accessed 17 Dec 2015).
- 6 DfE, 'GCSE and equivalent results in England 2014/15 (provisional)', table 1c.
- 7 DfE, 'Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England: 2013 to 2014', pp 3-4.
- 8 DfE, 'Pupil absence in schools in England: 2013 to 2014: main tables'.
- 9 House of Commons Library, 'NEET'. Figures are for the third quarter of 2015 (July-Sept).
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 The Prince's Trust, *The Cost of Exclusion: Counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK*, 2010, www.inspiringenterprise.rbs.com/sites/default/files/resources/theprincestrustthecostofexclusion.pdf (accessed 17 Dec 2015).
- 12 Ross, *Disengagement from Education among 14-16 Year Olds*.
- 13 JD Davies and J Lee, 'To attend or not attend? Why some students choose school and others reject it', *Support for Learning* 21, no 4, 2006, pp 204-9.
- 14 Ross, *Disengagement from Education among 14-16 Year Olds*.

- 15 S Sodha and J Margo, *Ex Curricula*, Demos, 2010, www.demos.co.uk/files/Ex-curricula_-_web.pdf (accessed 17 Dec 2015).
- 16 Ross, *Disengagement from Education among 14–16 Year Olds*.
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Disengagement from learning is a widespread and persistent problem in the British education system. Evidence suggests that as many as half of all pupils are disengaged by the time they sit their GCSEs. In the short term, disengagement is associated with poorer levels of attainment, attendance and behaviour. In the long term, it wastes potential, closes doors to good jobs, and drags down the wider economy.

Over the last two academic years, between 2013 and 2015, Demos has run a pilot in four secondary schools across the country to test the effectiveness of ‘coproduction’ as a new approach to tackling educational disengagement. Already well established in health and social care settings, coproduction challenges the traditional relationship between ‘expert’ service providers and ‘passive’ service users, involving the latter as active partners in service design and delivery. In practice this has meant disengaged students working in partnership with school staff to have more say in their learning, identify changes they would like to see in school, and develop their own practical projects to bring these about.

This report presents the findings of a concurrent evaluation, outlining the impact the pilot has had on participating students, staff, and schools, as well as drawing out wider lessons for practitioners interested in the approach.

Our experience has shown how challenging this process can be, but also – when it works – how rewarding. Participating pupils who might previously have been defined in school by their disengagement have been seen in a new light, have grown in confidence and developed new skills, and have made very positive contributions to their school community.

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ISBN 978-1-909037-99-1 £10

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