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## **Evaluation of valued youth: a national peer-tutoring programme to increase self confidence and motivation**

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# EVALUATION OF VALUED YOUTH: A NATIONAL PEER-TUTORING PROGRAMME TO INCREASE SELF CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

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## *Abstract*

*Established first in the USA, Valued Youth has operated in the UK since 1996, and is currently implemented in about 50 schools in 8 regions. The programme is intended to help secondary school students who are at risk of disengaging with school or under-performing for a variety of reasons. These students are selected as tutors, given training on how to work with younger children and placed in a local primary school where they support pupils' learning. Valued Youth can be seen as one of many initiatives in secondary schools on re-engagement in learning and contributes to the UK government strategy of extending opportunities and providing flexible learning experiences to meet individual learners' needs and aptitudes.*

*Evidence from the USA has shown the value of the programme in reducing drop-out, strengthening youngsters' perceptions of self and school, and reducing disciplinary referrals and absenteeism. The evaluation discussed in this paper considers the effect of the programme in a UK context, not only in terms of young people's attendance, attainment and confidence, but also in terms of what sort of youngsters seem to benefit and the effects of financial rewards, if any, on the outcomes.*

*The paper reports on the first year of a two-year evaluation. Data were obtained from a pre- and post-questionnaire survey among tutors, a workshop with coordinators and visits to selected case study schools in several regions. Almost all tutors enjoyed the placement experience and would recommend the experience to others. There was a relatively low dropout and the programme was warmly appreciated by participating primary schools. We have some evidence that Valued Youth raises confidence, improves communication skills and self esteem and keeps some at risk youngsters on track in school. Many types of youngsters benefit from the experience; those who lack confidence and have poor communication skills seem to make the most progress, but more evidence is needed to confirm that finding. Successful tutors tend to be those who are committed to the programme, willing to learn, are flexible and cooperative, and have some ability to interact with others, particularly children and primary teachers.*

## **I. Introduction**

The Valued Youth programme was created by the Intercultural Development Research Association in 1984 and supported from the outset by Coca-Cola as a means to keep youngsters attending school who are at risk of dropping out. From a modest start in five school districts in San Antonio, Texas, USA, the scheme had spread nationally to about 100 schools in over 20 cities in the USA by 2002-3. It was adopted in Britain in 1996 and in Brazil in 2002. In the original model, secondary students identified as being at risk of drop out work with three elementary students, also identified as being at risk, for a minimum of four hours per week. Tutors would normally meet with their secondary school coordinator once a week in order to develop tutoring skills, improve personal reading, writing and other skills and to reflect on successes and contributions, hence improving self awareness and pride. Central to the scheme is a reward system where tutors are paid the minimum wage for their work, receive certificates of merit and appreciation, are invited on field trips with other tutees, receive media attention and attend ceremonies where certificates and gifts are awarded to recognise their achievement. The results of a longitudinal study in the San Antonio area showed that the dropout rates for tutors was significantly lower than that of a comparison group and the national rate (Cardenas, Robledo Montecel, Supik and Harris, 1992).

From a similarly small start in 1996 in the UK, the Valued Youth (VY) programme has grown to involve about 50 schools in 8 regions, with about 350 participating pupil-tutors. The model of operation is similar to that in the USA, but not identical. Tutors are chosen who are likely to benefit, but not always at risk of dropping out, and are similarly placed in primary schools. Support materials are provided by the VY central office and coordinators train the tutors and, through regular meetings each week, provide encouragement for tutors in their new role in supporting primary school pupils. Up to last year, 2003-4, participating primary schools received a number of books as a token of appreciation from the sponsor.

The VY programme can be viewed as making a contribution to the wider government policy of developing 14-19 education which is flexible and appropriate for the individual needs and aptitudes of students, particularly for those who have not been previously successful (DfES, 2002, 2003). In South Yorkshire, for example, the Valued Youth programme has been supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) in a re-engagement programme within a Pathways to Success project to raise achievement and improve motivation and employability skills as part of the Objective 1 programme, 2001-2007. This programme has been recently evaluated and reported (Coldwell, Holland, Trickey and Rybinski, 2004).

### ***Review of previous evaluations***

There have been three previous evaluation reports to date, two from the University of Greenwich including a pilot (2002, 2003) and one from the National Children's Bureau (2003). The first one piloted a repeated measure questionnaire administered at the start and at the end of the tutors' placement. The materials sought to explore the emotional development of the tutors, their hyperactivity, conduct, personal problems, pro social behaviour and difficulties experienced in

acting in the role of a tutor. The overall finding of the pilot study was that tutors showed significant improvements in ratings of behaviour, strengths and difficulties, academic attitudes and self-concept after participation in VY (Maras and Vital, 2002).

The piloted test materials were employed in the main evaluation to follow a year later, but additionally a matched control group was used for comparative purposes. The sample size was increased to 326 tutors with 326 in the control group. The methodology was similar to that used in the pilot - mainly questionnaires at the beginning and end of involvement with VY (Maras and Nash, 2003).

The third evaluation was conducted in the summer of 2003 by the National Children's Bureau (Shaw, 2003). It was limited in scope, but provided additional qualitative data to complement the largely quantitative data obtained earlier. The methodology used focus groups of school coordinators, VY tutors and former tutors. The school coordinators provided comments on the "success factors" for the VY programme, the impact of the programme and issues concerning deliverability. Data from VY tutors who were about to complete the programme were grouped into educational, social and personal categories and a comparison made between the responses.

The VY Steering Group and sponsors felt that a further evaluation with a more qualitative approach was necessary to gather one-to-one impressions from coordinators, participating primary schools and young people on the operation of the programme and its success or otherwise in improving youngsters' self esteem and achievement. It was also thought important to gain answers to specific questions, four of which, relevant to the first year of the evaluation, were as follows.

1. What criteria are schools using in selecting pupils for the programme and how do these impact on the programme outcomes?
2. What is the impact of involvement in the programme on young people's school attendance, level of attainment and confidence?
3. What are the main characteristics of a 'successful' tutor?
4. Does the payment of financial rewards to pupils have any impact on outcomes?

In the text which follows, these are referred to as 'Evaluation Questions' to distinguish them from questionnaire questions.

## **2. Methodology**

To gain general information on the success or otherwise of the programme in achieving its aims and answers to the specific questions, it was decided to adopt three main elements in the evaluation: 1. an orientation workshop with the case study secondary school coordinators, 2. a survey of participating tutors using pre- and post -experience questionnaires, 3. visits to case study secondary schools and participating primary schools. There were six main sources of data: questionnaires to tutors, interviews with coordinators and senior staff and interviews with tutors during visits to the secondary schools, interviews with

coordinators and class teachers in participating primary schools, observation, where possible, of tutors working in primary classrooms and documentary data.

The orientation workshop served to help the team explain the evaluation model to the coordinators to enable them to plan for the evaluation, to gain initial data, via focus groups on key issues, and finally build a relationship between evaluators and coordinators and establish access for the visits.

Pre- and post-questionnaires (Survey 1 and 2) were administered to the majority of participating tutors (244) across the UK, including all 10 schools visited in the first year (Cohort A). The regions in the first year were Birmingham, Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire. The questionnaires were written in a friendly style with 32 questions in the first questionnaire and 33 in the second as it was felt necessary to explore additionally whether school work had got worse because of missed lessons when attending the primary school. Almost all the questions were identical in the two questionnaires to see if there were any significant changes in the perceptions of confidence and behaviour in the interval. The first questionnaire was trialled in a school with many tutors and scrutinised by other coordinators. Questions were subject to rating by tutors on a 5-point Likert scale and there was opportunity for free response. The questions particularly focussed on issues surrounding tutors' personal feelings, views and motivation, parental attitudes, attendance and behaviour.

Normally two visits were conducted to each of the 10 case study secondary schools and at least one visit to a participating primary school. One visit was conducted early in the placement period and another towards the end. The purpose of these was to

- interview the VY tutors in small groups
- interview the coordinator and senior staff
- visit the primary school for an interview with the headteacher and /or class teacher/ organiser and observe some VY tutors working with primary children
- collect data about tutors (KS3 SATs, targets set, attendance/behaviour records, and other distinctive information)
- check the validity of the data being concurrently collected by questionnaire

The case study schools (10), though small in number, were selected to be as representative of the whole number of participating schools as possible. For example, schools were chosen of varying size, age range (11-16 or 11-18) and location; some were experienced in running VY while some were not, having just started. The schools had to agree to being involved and were given a small remuneration for their time spent.

The interview questions to coordinators and senior staff focussed on their role in the selection, training and encouragement of tutors, liaison with parents, and choice of primary school and the profile of tutors selected. Further questions centred on running the programme: monitoring the process, feedback from primary schools, parents and tutors, communication with central office and VY coordinators in other schools. Finally, the coordinators were asked about the

reward system operating in that school and long term plans and benefits. The interview questions were usually sent to the staff concerned prior to the visit and the word processed interview notes sent to the interviewees following the visit to check the accuracy of the statements made.

The questions directed to the tutors (total of 61) included what they thought the VY programme was for, and asked them to identify the activities they particularly enjoyed/did not enjoy in the primary school and to state the reaction of their friends to their involvement in VY. There were also some questions to explore any changes in behaviour or attendance and any rewards for joining. For triangulation purposes some questions replicated the questions posed in the questionnaire such as their feelings on being selected, why they were chosen, on helping primary youngsters, their parents' attitudes and whether they would complete the programme.

The questions directed to the primary headteachers or primary teachers or coordinators were designed to explore their perceptions of the qualities of successful tutors, what worked well and the alleged benefits of the experience both for the tutors and the primary youngsters. Again, the word processed reports were sent to the primary coordinators after the visit to confirm the accuracy of the statements made.

In the observation of the tutors at work in classrooms the team looked for evidence of training, such as punctuality, reliability, cooperation, prior preparation by the tutor, communication skills with staff as well as children and, finally, motivation and confidence.

Next year the plan is to conduct a third visit to each Cohort A school to see if there are any significant long term benefits of engagement with the programme and also to conduct visits to 10 further schools (Cohort B) in different regions of the UK to check whether the initial findings are replicated elsewhere.

### **3. Findings**

#### **3.1. Questionnaire analysis**

The first questionnaire (Survey 1) was distributed between December 2004 and March 2005 when the tutors were commencing their placement. The second questionnaire (Survey 2) was sent out between May and June 2005 towards the end of their experience. The analysis presented here gives some general findings and then groups the main findings under the specific questions posed. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was used in the analysis of data.

The first questionnaire (Survey 1) was sent out to 244 tutors in 42 schools and completed by 171 tutors in 31 schools in 12 LEAs (70% response rate). Some schools did not send any returns because the school had dropped out of the programme, generally because of staffing changes. 70% of the responses came from girls which was higher than expected. The number of tutors in each school surveyed ranged from 1 in a small pupil referral unit (PRU) to 14 in a large

comprehensive school. Roughly 50% of the sample of tutors was in Year 10, 30% in year 9, and the rest split evenly between Year 8 and Year 11.

The second questionnaire (Survey 2) was completed by 117 pupils from 25 schools in 11 LEAs. 244 questionnaires were sent out as before, but 20 pupils were no longer taking part in the programme, giving a population of 224. Thus the response rate was lower at 52%, but still reasonable for a postal questionnaire. The fact that the questionnaires were sent out via the VY office probably contributed to the relative high response rate in both surveys.

**Table 1: Returns from each LEA**

|                   | Survey 1   |            | Survey 2   |            |
|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                   | Frequency  | Percent    | Frequency  | Percent    |
| Barnsley          | 26         | 15.2       | 27         | 23.1       |
| Birmingham        | 46         | 26.9       | 27         | 23.1       |
| Blackpool         | 5          | 2.9        | -          | -          |
| Coventry          | 2          | 1.2        | 2          | 1.7        |
| Doncaster         | 14         | 8.2        | 10         | 8.5        |
| Hammersmith       | 15         | 8.8        | 13         | 11.1       |
| Kent              | 7          | 4.1        | 7          | 6.0        |
| Lincolnshire      | 13         | 7.6        | 9          | 7.7        |
| North Lanarkshire | 2          | 1.2        | 3          | 2.6        |
| Nottinghamshire   | 4          | 2.3        | 4          | 3.4        |
| Richmond          | 7          | 4.1        | 5          | 4.3        |
| Rotherham         | 30         | 17.5       | 10         | 8.5        |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>171</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>117</b> | <b>100</b> |

The 20 pupils who had left the programme came from schools with a total number of 147 tutors, giving a drop out rate of 13.6%, although it is not possible to say how representative this number is. Reasons given for drop out were categorised (see Table 2 below) with 40% of those dropping out because it interfered with their studies and with moving schools as the next most common reason.

**Table 2: Reasons for leaving the programme**

| Reason                                     | frequency | percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Interfering with studies                   | 8         | 40         |
| Moved schools                              | 5         | 25         |
| Personal reasons/ did not want to continue | 3         | 15         |
| lack of commitment                         | 3         | 15         |
| permanently excluded                       | 1         | 5          |

The highest proportion of respondents was from years 9 and 10; however year 8 and 11 were also represented, as seen in Table 3 below. Of the 117 respondents, 69% (81) were girls, in line with findings from the first survey.

**Table 3: Year groups of respondents**

| Year group | Frequency | Percent |
|------------|-----------|---------|
| 8          | 12        | 10.5    |
| 9          | 35        | 30.7    |
| 10         | 57        | 50      |
| 11         | 10        | 8.8     |
| Total      | 117       | 100     |

Each questionnaire question was analysed by year group and gender. Where differences by year group and gender appear to be significant<sup>1</sup>, these comparisons are presented in the relevant sections below. In addition, comparisons of differences in responses from the 95 tutors who had responded to both questionnaires were conducted. These are included where they appear to be significant. The relevant p-values are given as footnotes in the text where differences are presented. Therefore, unless noted otherwise, figures presented in the second survey are not significantly different from those in the first survey.

***Evaluation Question 1: What criteria are schools using in selecting pupils for the programme and how do these impact on the programme outcomes?***

***Analysis from first questionnaire***

At this early stage of the programme, only 30% of the tutors knew why they were chosen to be a VY tutor. Three quarters of the pupils described themselves as enjoying being at secondary school; there was a slight gender difference here, 80% of girls enjoyed school, compared with 73% of boys.

93% of tutors agreed or strongly agreed that they had lots of friends at school, and 92% agreed or strongly agreed that they liked spending time with other people. For this last question, there was again a gender difference: 95% of girls said they liked spending time with other people, compared with 88% of boys.

There were two questions about personality. The first asked to what extent tutors agreed that they think a lot before deciding what to do. 81% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, with only 9% disagreeing. The second asked about to what extent they like to set targets. Here, 60% agreed or strongly agreed, whilst 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

36% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that they need to behave better at school, and 32% said they needed to attend school better. There was a gender difference here, with 43% of boys agreeing or strongly agreeing that they needed to attend school better, compared with 33% of girls.

74% of the sample agreed they usually handed their homework in on time, although there was a gender difference here: 77% of girls compared with 71% of boys agreed with this statement. Younger pupils were also more likely to say they

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<sup>1</sup> Chi-square tests, using a significance level of 5%, were used to identify where differences by gender and year group were large. Therefore data where p-values are below 0.05 are presented in the relevant section. Chi square tests should be used with random samples, so the p values should be treated with caution: however, this provides a rule of thumb in deciding which differences to present.



handed homework in on time. 66% of the sample agreed they put a lot of time and effort into it.

A number of questions around parental involvement and awareness were asked, and two of these related to pupil selection and the start of the programme. 95% of pupils said their parents knew about Valued Youth, and 79% agreed or strongly agreed that their parents were glad they had been asked.

In the free response question, of the 60 who commented, 9 tutors (15%) mentioned that they were glad to have been chosen to take part. Comments included:

*I'm glad I got picked and it's lots of fun*

*I am glad I got chosen to go to [name of primary school] because it is brilliant and I like being with the children*

*It's a brilliant thing to be asked to take part in*

### ***Analysis from second questionnaire***

At this later stage, still only 32% of the tutors knew why they were chosen to be a VY tutor. 81% of the pupils described themselves as enjoying being at secondary school, although the gender difference reported in the first survey was not replicated in the second survey.

95% of tutors agreed or strongly agreed that they had lots of friends at school, and 94% agreed or strongly agreed that they liked spending time with other people (as above, the gender difference reported in the first survey was not replicated).

With regard to the question about whether they think a lot before deciding what to do, 78% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, with only 8% disagreeing. When asked to what extent they like to set targets, 56% agreed or strongly agreed, whilst 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In the second survey, unlike the first survey, there was a gender difference. 59% of girls agreed with this statement, compared with 50% of boys, and only 15% of girls disagreed compared with 31% of boys<sup>2</sup>.

25% said they needed to attend school better. 34% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that they need to behave better at school. As with the first survey, there was a gender difference here<sup>3</sup>, with 53% of boys agreeing or strongly agreeing that they needed to attend school better, compared with 26% of girls.

There was a significant change here in the responses to both these questions for girls: girls were less likely to think they needed to behave better at school

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<sup>2</sup> p=0.036

<sup>3</sup> p=0.015

compared with the first survey<sup>4</sup>, and less likely to think they needed to attend school better<sup>5</sup>.

72% of the sample agreed they usually handed their homework in on time, and as with the first survey there was a gender difference here: 79% of girls compared with 58% of boys agreed or strongly agreed with this statement<sup>6</sup>. There was no significant difference between age groups, in contrast with the first survey. 66% of the tutors said they put lots of time and effort into their homework (17% disagreed). There was a significant<sup>7</sup> gender difference here: 71% of girls agreed with this statement, compared with 64% of boys, and 13% of girls disagreed, compared with 26% of boys.

With regard to parental involvement and awareness, and two of these related to pupil selection, 97% of pupils said their parents knew about Valued Youth, and 84% agreed or strongly agreed that their parents were glad they had been asked. All the pupils stated that they were glad they had been asked to take part in the programme.

***Evaluation Question 2: What is the impact of involvement in the programme on young people's school attendance, level of attainment and confidence?***

***Analysis from first questionnaire***

Clearly, in any early survey, this question cannot be properly answered, but some survey responses, in addition to some of those presented in the previous section, can help us build a picture to make comparisons.

First of all, 95% of tutors agreed or strongly agreed that they are always on time when they attend primary school. In addition, 63% of the sample agreed that Valued Youth was helping them be on time for school and lessons (17% didn't know, and 19% disagreed).

80% of pupils said they wanted to feel more confident, a key issue in selection criteria. At the time of the first survey 79% of the sample said they were already feeling more confident because of being a Valued Youth tutor. From the free response question, 7 of the 60 tutors who commented (12%) mentioned feeling more confident. Comments included the following:

*Doing Valued Youth makes me feel more confident talking to other people*

*I really enjoy taking part in Valued Youth. The more I take part, the more I feel confident*

*It is making me feel better about myself and I'm starting to get on better with all members of staff*

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<sup>4</sup> p=0.031

<sup>5</sup> p=0.033

<sup>6</sup> p=0.005

<sup>7</sup> p=0.004

### ***Analysis from second questionnaire***

96% of tutors agreed or strongly agreed that they are always on time when they attend primary school. In addition, 57% of the sample agreed that Valued Youth was helping them be on time for school and lessons (17% didn't know, and 26% disagreed). 54% of tutors agreed that Valued Youth was helping them attend school better, compared with 24% who disagreed. One tutor commented:

*I love working with the children and I also like working with the adults at the school. It has helped me attend school more, too.*

64% of pupils said they wanted to feel more confident at this stage of the programme, compared with 90% of the pupils surveyed in the first survey. This was a significant difference for those pupils who had responded to both surveys<sup>8</sup>, indicating that over the course of the programme fewer young people felt the need to improve in confidence. There was a small but significant<sup>9</sup> gender difference for this question in the second survey: 65% of girls agreed with this statement, compared with 56% of boys.

At the time of the second survey, 91% of the sample said they were feeling more confident because of being a Valued Youth tutor, compared with 79% in the first survey, although there was not a significant difference for those who had responded to both surveys. From the open question, 6 of the 62 tutors who commented (10%) mentioned feeling more confident. Comments similar to those in the first questionnaire included the following:

*Valued Youth is the only thing that has made me more confident*

*I feel a lot more confident because I attended the Valued Youth programme*

### ***Evaluation Question 3: What are the main characteristics of a 'successful' tutor***

#### ***Analysis from first questionnaire***

A number of questions were designed to explore tutors' attitudes, feelings and motivation to see if any common themes emerged.

When asked how the tutors felt about the primary school at this early stage, almost all (96%) of the tutors agreed or strongly agreed that they like helping at the primary school, a very encouraging response, and none disagreed (3 tutors didn't know). There was a gender difference here: 87% of girls strongly agreed with statement compared with 71% of boys. 93% of the sample agreed that they felt they were treated like an adult at primary school, and 74% felt the teachers at primary school liked them (all but one of the rest didn't know).

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<sup>8</sup> p=0.002

<sup>9</sup> p=0.05

Almost all those who commented in this area in the free response question were positive, and none was unequivocally negative. The majority of those who commented stated specifically that they enjoyed Valued Youth (33 out of 60 comments - 55%). The tutors felt it was fun (7 comments), and enjoyed helping the primary pupils (7 comments) after, perhaps, some trepidation. For example:

*At the first day I was really nervous, but I am settling in well now and I have made a few friends and I really enjoy going there*

*I am really enjoying myself at primary school because I like to help children with their reading and writing skills*

85% of the sample felt that primary school children looked up to them (only one person disagreed, the others didn't know). 92% agreed having a tutor at primary school was a good thing for the primary pupils, and a couple of comments made in the free response question supported this.

*I think it is really useful to have a Valued Youth teacher for the primary school children and it is boosting their confidence as well*

*It is a good thing, Valued Youth; it gives the younger children something to look up to*

86% didn't mind missing lessons to be a tutor at the primary school, although 8% disagreed with this statement, and 2 comments in response to the open question mentioned this. For example:

*I like Valued Youth, my parents think it is OK, but they are worried in case it affects my own education because I miss all of my lessons, but I don't really mind as long as I don't miss out really important bits*

A further set of questions asked about other possible benefits of participating in the programme. 73% of tutors thought that being a VY tutor made them feel important at secondary school: 17% didn't know and 10% disagreed with this statement. 63% of tutors agreed that Valued Youth helped them outside school, whilst 10 disagreed and 27% didn't know (partly perhaps because of a lack of clarity in the question). 94% of the tutors hoped Valued Youth would help them when they left school. There were 6 comments on this from the open question including the following:

*Even though I've only just started, I'm really enjoying it and thinking about being a primary school teacher when I leave school*

*I think it is a good programme because it gives us an idea about what it is like to work and could influence us to work with children when we are older*

Finally, two questions asked about parental attitudes (other than those covered in Question 1 above). 61% of the tutors agreed or strongly agreed that their parents thought Valued Youth was helping them at school. Only 2% disagreed; the other

tutors said they didn't know. There was a difference by year group here: younger tutors were more likely to agree with this than older tutors. 56% of tutors said their parents thought the programme was helping them outside of school; 8% disagreed and 35% didn't know.

### ***Analysis from second questionnaire***

At this later stage, all but one of the tutors (99%) agreed or strongly agreed that they like helping out at the primary school. There was no significant gender difference here, in contrast with the first survey. 92% felt they were treated like an adult at the primary school (a significant reduction<sup>10</sup> from the first survey for those who responded to both, particularly among the boys<sup>11</sup> and those in Years 10 and 11<sup>12</sup>), and 85% felt the teachers at primary school liked them.

Almost all those who commented in the open question were positive about the experience. The majority of those who commented stated specifically that they enjoyed Valued Youth (44 out of 62 comments - 71%, compared with 55% of comments made in the first survey). The tutors felt it was "*brilliant*" (3 comments) and "*great*" (4 comments). 11 mentioned getting a lot out of working with the primary school children. Comments included:

*It is really fun and rewarding when I help the children*

*It has been a very good experience for me and I really enjoyed working with little ones and I felt more independent and I felt like I was part of primary school*

4 mentioned working with adults in the primary school specifically, and many mentioned the primary school work overall as being a major positive experience. One tutor summed it up:

*I think it has been a fantastic experience that has opened my eyes to the real world. It also showed me how clever younger kids are*

There were 5 negative comments, mentioning a less positive experience such as:

*I am fed up of listening to readers. I wish I could have a better job to do*

*There are 4 teachers in my class and including me. Very over crowded*

Two tutors noted that they had been negative at the start, but had changed their minds:

*At first I didn't want to do the Valued Youth programme, but I like it now and enjoy going to the primary school and seeing my mentor at Coca-Cola*

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<sup>10</sup> p=0.024

<sup>11</sup> p=0.032

<sup>12</sup> p=0.003

*I didn't want to do the programme because I didn't want to drop a subject. But I have enjoyed meeting my mentor because it has helped me*

89% of the sample felt that primary school children looked up to them (the others didn't know). Those in Year 8 and 9 were significantly<sup>13</sup> more likely to think the primary school pupils looked up to them (98% of those in Years 8 and 9 agreed or strongly agreed, compared with 82% of those in Years 10 and 11). 89% of the tutors agreed having a tutor at primary school was a good thing for the primary pupils, and several comments made in response to the open question supported this, and one tutor discussed this in some detail:

*One of the pupils in the primary school that I attended had very low self esteem and without the Valued Youth programme I think it would have been very hard for him to get on in school and make friends and be confident*

85% didn't mind missing lessons to be a tutor at the primary school (although 10% disagreed with this statement, and 2 comments in response to the open question mentioned this:

*It's a waste of education but at the end it's good for my CV*

*I didn't want to do the programme because I didn't want to drop a subject*

A new question in the second survey asked whether tutors felt their school work had got worse because they had to miss lessons to go to the primary school. Again, about 10% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, but 77% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Two tutors mentioned the positive effect the tutoring had on their work in school:

*I really enjoy it because it helps me in my school*

*This programme is really helping me with my own school work*

A further set of questions asked about other successes of the programme. 58% of tutors thought that being a VY tutor made them feel important at secondary school; 28% didn't know and 13% disagreed. This was a significant<sup>14</sup> change from the first survey (when 70% of tutors agreed with this statement), perhaps indicating increased realism about the impact of the programme at this later stage. The change was significant for boys<sup>15</sup> when examined separately, but not girls.

60% of tutors agreed that Valued Youth helped them outside school, whilst 15% disagreed and 25% didn't know. There was a significant difference between those in Years 8 and 9 compared with those in Years 10 and 11, but it is difficult to interpret (see Table 7 below): younger tutors appear to be more unsure about this than older tutors.

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<sup>13</sup> p=0.035

<sup>14</sup> p=0.002

<sup>15</sup> p=0.001

87% of the tutors hoped Valued Youth would help them when they left school. There was a significant change for Year 10 and 11 pupils here: they were less positive about this by the time of the second survey. There were 3 comments on this from the open question, all of them positive, including:

*It's making me more confident about it because when I'm old I might want to be a teacher*

Finally, two questions asked about parental attitudes (other than those covered in Evaluation Question 1 above). 58% of the tutors agreed or strongly agreed that their parents thought Valued Youth was helping them at school. Only 6% disagreed; the other tutors said they didn't know. There was a significant<sup>16</sup> difference by gender here, although it is difficult to interpret. Girls are more likely to strongly agree, but, conversely, the only tutors who disagree are girls. There was no significant difference by year group, in contrast with the first survey's findings.

49% of tutors said their parents thought the programme was helping them outside of school; 16% disagreed and 35% didn't know. There was no significant difference by year group here, in contrast with the first survey. However, there was a significant<sup>17</sup> change here for those who took part in both surveys; they were less likely to agree with this statement by the time of the second survey. This was significant<sup>18</sup> for girls but not boys when they were analysed separately.

### **3.2 Qualitative analysis: orientation workshop and visits to case study schools**

Again general findings are presented first, followed by findings relevant to the specific evaluation questions.

Most coordinators in the case study schools were employed as learning mentors, but some held other posts such as student support adviser. As learning mentors they had a lot of autonomy, but were usually responsible to a senior member of the teaching staff. Three were qualified teachers: head of PHSE, a PE teacher and Head of Learning Support. Most schools had operated the VY scheme for at least 3 years, but for two schools this was their first year. Almost all the coordinators played a part in the selection of tutors and tutor- training which varied from regular one-hour sessions each week at the start of the placement to more ad hoc arrangements. In one school the learning mentor in the primary school was involved in the selection and training of tutors. Almost all coordinators held feedback sessions and offered regular support once the tutor was in primary school, but not always every week. All the coordinators liaised with the primary schools chosen, and there were sometimes as many as 4 primary or nursery schools involved. In one case the nursery, infant and junior school were all on the same site as the secondary school. Some coordinators visited the primary school once a month during placement and one coordinator also paid visits to the tutors' homes.

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<sup>16</sup> p=0.018

<sup>17</sup> p=0.013

<sup>18</sup> p=0.010

Primary schools were largely chosen on the basis of proximity and the quality of the long-term relationship with the secondary school. Occasionally an additional factor was the presence of a sympathetic learning mentor in the primary school to assist in the liaison and as pointed out earlier, the learning mentor sometimes contributed to the tutor-training. Sometimes the primary school was chosen on the basis of religious orientation which was true of Roman Catholic secondary schools. The learning mentor or the teaching assistant was generally the coordinator in the primary school; only rarely did the headteacher take on that role.

The start of the placement in the primary schools varied considerably. Some experienced schools tended to start early in the academic year - October or November - while others waited until January. Schools new to the scheme did not make placements until mid-February or later. Many schools continued the placement to June so that some tutors experienced 30 or more weeks in a primary school. The time spent in the primary school varied from 1 hour a week to half a day. Eight of the case study schools placed Y10 students; one placed Y9 and one Y11 students.

### **Evaluation Question 1. What criteria are schools using in selecting pupils for the programme and how do these impact on the programme outcomes?**

From the interviews with coordinators and senior staff in schools, it is clear that the selection criteria varied widely, but common characteristics were average ability, quietness, shyness, tendency to worry, lacking in confidence - described as 'wall flowers' - fairly poor self image, poor communication with teachers and/or peers, reasonable attendance and behaviour, well mannered and fairly reliable. The choice of tutors was sometimes influenced by the need to protect the secondary school's reputation with the primary school; but nevertheless some schools chose riskier tutors with special needs (even statemented), poor attendance, behavioural or fairly severe family or communication problems. For example, there were some school phobics, those with poor attendance at 70% or less and poor punctuality (apparently condoned by parents), two with mild autism, one with an eating disorder and several came from dysfunctional families with perhaps poor hygiene. Some had suffered bullying and several were declared 'noisy' or had anger management problems and even ADHD. In some schools, tutors were chosen from an 'alternative curriculum group,' those who were released from some national curriculum subjects to pursue more flexible and vocational pathways or they volunteered from a learning support unit. But not all tutors, according to KS3 results, were of average ability, a few were above average. Although not a declared intention, more girls were selected than boys: about 70% females and 30% males. Pupils had to agree to join the programme and thus had some interest in and commitment to working in a primary school and parents were usually asked for their signed written consent.

It was the more experienced schools which generally took the greater risks. In contrast with the practice in the USA referred to earlier, there was rarely a risk of selected pupils dropping out completely. In some schools with years of experience in running VY, the selection process was conducted early with good consultation with other staff, chiefly Heads of Year. In our view, good practice was when the selection process started in June in the preceding year so that the



training could commence early in the academic year with placements in primary schools starting in early October. In schools which were less experienced, the selection process was more diffuse and delayed so that tutors could not usually start their placements until January or February. Often schools put on a launch event to which parents were invited, and this played a part in the selection (and orientation) process.

Only rarely did the primary schools play a part in the selection process, even though some learning mentors in the primary schools contributed to the training of tutors. But often potential tutors were interviewed by the headteacher or learning mentor and sometimes ground rules for selection were established and followed, such as good manners, politeness and ability to cooperate. About half the primary schools did not accept former pupils.

Some of the riskier pupils dropped out from the programme during the year; a few 'low-risk' tutors dropped out voluntarily because of worries about missing school subjects. Others were asked to leave because of a lack of motivation or reliability in the primary school. Many high risk pupils stayed enthusiastically to the end of the programme, gained tremendously from the experience and changed their behaviour as explained later. The overall dropout from the case study schools was only about 10%, which compares with about 14% from the wider questionnaire survey.

From the interviews with tutors both at the beginning and towards the end of their placement, it was clear that almost all tutors were pleased to have been chosen. There were statements such as *proud, lucky* and *excited* and one tutor said *felt shocked as I hardly do any work*. Many said that their friends were a bit jealous and would have liked to have joined too. But, in line with the evidence from the first questionnaire, most were unsure of why they were chosen or, indeed, what was the overall purpose of the Valued Youth programme. Two commented from one school that they were chosen

*Because we had spare time on Tuesday afternoons and we were just working in the library*

Some others thought that being chosen was something to do with their past performance, behaviour or skill:

*Because I made a good effort last year*

*I'm reliable and know about computers*

But some were quite realistic saying:

*Because I am quiet and don't put my hand up much*

*To calm down and show more interest in everything*

As to what the programme was for, some tutors had clearly been briefed by their coordinators or the VY materials so that statements such as *to improve*

confidence, to chill out, to help my behaviour were made. But in contrast, there were statements such as:

*To help primary children and give secondary students ideas on working with children*

*Help a pupil who is unhappy and give them a better time*

In our view there are advantages in not being too explicit about the aims of the programme and why a tutor is chosen. Then there are fewer burdens of expectation and any gains in self esteem, confidence or communication skills come as a surprise to the tutor.

In line with the findings from the questionnaire, almost all tutors interviewed really enjoyed their primary school experience and were very positive about helping primary children, though some admitted to being nervous at first. Tutors were either allocated to two primary children in need of special attention or helped with a range of individuals or groups of children in a variety of tasks such as listening to poor readers, helping with writing and maths, ICT, art work, displays, music, school plays and trips. Apart from those who eventually left the programme, tutors were usually highly valued by the primary schools. Primary teachers were generally fully aware of the aims of the programme, well-briefed on the characteristics of the tutors and soon learned about their individual strengths and weaknesses. They often reported enthusiastically on the success of the programme for individual tutors and the benefits to the school, for example:

*The children enjoy working with the older pupils. It is useful to have an extra pair of hands. They are good role models. It helps with transition as there will be some older pupils that our children will know. Last year's pupils said it was nice to see a friendly face at the secondary school. The tutors say they will look out for the pupils when they move schools.*

*This is the first year we've had a pupil tutor in the nursery from Valued Youth and she's a star. She has easily slipped into the role, is no effort and is always looking for things to do.*

*Joan (a pseudonym for a girl with an eating disorder) showed a creative talent particularly during art lessons. Her ICT skills were absolutely fine and she clearly explained to individuals different ways that they could use software to find out information. The teachers were sorry to see her leave and the children continue to ask about her which shows she made a lasting impression on them over a short time.*

As mentioned earlier, parents were consulted about the programme before commencement and, according to the coordinators and most tutors, they were supportive and appreciative of the special attention afforded to their children and the progress made. They enjoyed the launch and celebration events. Two parents commented:

*No-one has ever said anything nice about my son before.*

*My child never wanted to go to school before.*

One parent went out of her way to thank the coordinator for what it has done for their daughter. One coordinator remarked that some parents are now in contact with the school whereas there was previously little contact. But a few parents were concerned about the GCSE lessons missed and may have been influential in withdrawing their child from the programme.

**Evaluation Question 2 : What is the impact of involvement in the programme on young people's school attendance, level of attainment and confidence?**

**Attendance:** Poor attendance was a criterion for only about 10% of the tutors selected for the programme in the case study schools as most coordinators were more interested in improving confidence and communication skills; but where it was an issue for a tutor with, say, poor attendance at 70-80% or below, attendance has in some cases improved. In one case the coordinator claimed that the programme:

*Kept one student on the school roll where there was a danger of exclusion*

And another said:

*One school refuser has been turned round and wants to be a teaching assistant.*

In another school, although one tutor improved her attendance another tutor's attendance deteriorated. That tutor admitted:

*I was on report for poor attendance [this year] but I still came to VY and college*

In another school one tutor got excluded, but interestingly kept up his VY placement. In yet another, a school phobic coped well in the primary school though less well in the secondary school.

In summary: as poor attendance is not a problem for most tutors, it cannot be claimed the programme contributes significantly to improving attendance.

**Level of attainment:** Again, since tutors were not generally selected with the specific aim of improving attainment, it hard to see any significant improvements. Besides any programme which occupies a mere 10% of the school week is not likely to make much noticeable impact on attainment because there are so many other factors operating. However, a few coordinators noted that homework was handed in more regularly by tutors since starting VY. Firmer indications of improvement may be noticeable only after a longer period.

**Confidence:** Since raising levels of confidence was a declared aim of most coordinators in selecting tutors, many coordinators had much to say about the

progress achieved. There were many success stories. Many commented on improved independence and communication after attending the primary placement. For example, one coordinator remarked:

*Tutors have become more independent. They no longer need to be reminded of their weekly commitment.*

Another said:

*They have improved in self esteem. They are more confident and re-engaged. They come to every session and [name of pupil] has improved her attendance. One has done very well on her work experience and has got a job from it.*

Many tutors too remarked in interviews that they had improved confidence. For example:

*I gained more confidence. The teachers at school have noticed because I speak out in class now.*

Some also admitted to behaving better, for example:

*I behave better because I see the teacher's point of view.*

### **Evaluation Question 3. What are the main characteristics of a 'successful' tutor?**

To some extent the notion of success varies with the individual coordinator, but most are looking for a stable relationship with the primary school which means good behaviour, reliable attendance, a valuable contribution and some observable change in the outlook or behaviour of the tutor, usually some improvement in skill, whether that is communication or confidence in handling potentially difficult situations. In summary: successful tutors, perform well in the primary school, improve their skills and complete the programme.

From discussions with secondary and primary school coordinators, successful tutors tended to be motivated to help primary children or develop that motivation as time went on, be cooperative, able to learn, had some ability to interact with adults and children, and had a special skill to offer such as ICT literacy or some creative flair in helping with art work, displays, music or the school play.

The programme seems to work particularly well with those pupils with relatively poor confidence, self esteem and / or communication skills at the outset. But there are no hard and fast rules here because some fairly high risk pupils with noisy, confrontational behaviour have also done well and proved an asset to the primary school. Probably a lot depends on how the pupil is treated in the primary school and the tasks given to do. We believe that good practice is displayed when the primary school takes time to match the tutor with the task to get the best out of the tutor.

#### **Evaluation Question 4. Does the payment of financial rewards to pupils have any impact on outcomes?**

Financial rewards were particularly common in the early years of adopting the VY programme in the UK. Coordinators tended to replicate the financial reward schemes in the USA. For perfect attendance at training sessions and the primary school, tutors in a few schools could earn £100. In other schools, shopping vouchers (£5 or £10) were common. But financial rewards are becoming less popular among coordinators and most rewards at present take the form of celebration events (with small gifts - pens and stationery) , special free trips with perhaps a meal included, other privileges and certificates. Some sort of reward is an integral part of the process.

There is no evidence that monetary rewards make any appreciable difference over other forms of recognition in terms of completing the programme, or adding to the sense of enjoyment and fulfilment of the tutor, his/her pride or self esteem. But all tutors welcome and enjoy the process of recognition, which might have otherwise have been lacking in their school lives.

#### **Summary of main findings**

There were no disagreement between the evidence obtained via quantitative and qualitative sources. Using qualitative sources for general comments and both qualitative and quantitative evidence for answers to the evaluation questions, it seems that

- Almost all the coordinators played a part in the selection of tutors and were usually responsible for the training and monitoring of tutors
- The number of participating primary schools per secondary school varied from one to four and primary schools were largely chosen on the basis of proximity, long-term good relationships and cooperative staff
- The start of placement in the primary schools varied from early October to mid-February; likewise the period of time spent by tutors in the primary school varied from 10 to 30 weeks. The time spent in the primary school by each tutor varied from one hour to two hours per week

#### **Evaluation Question 1. What criteria are schools using in selecting pupils for the programme and how do these impact on the programme outcomes?**

- Most schools selected pupils from Y10, but some selected from Y8, Y9 and Y11
- Although many schools declared a policy of selecting both boys and girls equally, in fact more girls were selected than boys (ratio about 70: 30)

- Selection criteria varied widely, but most tutors were chosen to improve their self esteem, confidence, communication skills and, occasionally behaviour, attendance and punctuality
- The more experienced schools tended to select more 'high risk' tutors with special needs, challenging behaviour, including anger management problems
- The overall dropout from the programme was about 14% (10% from the case study schools) with the most common reason for dropout being that the programme interfered with GCSE subject lessons
- Almost all tutors said they liked being at secondary school, were pleased to have been chosen, enjoyed their primary school experience and were warmly valued by primary class teachers
- Most parents were very supportive of the programme and some recognized differences in their children's confidence and attitude during the placement. But some withdrew their children from the programme because it interfered with other lessons

**Evaluation Question 2. What is the impact of involvement in the programme on young people's school attendance, level of attainment and confidence**

- As very few tutors were chosen on the basis of poor attendance the programme has had little noticeable effect on attendance. There were some isolated incidents of improvement for poor attendees, but in some cases attendance declined. Some coordinators and tutors felt that punctuality, where there was a problem, had improved
- There is not enough evidence to report on changes in attainment following the programme, but there are some indications that attitudes to homework improved for a few tutors
- Confidence levels and communication skills have improved markedly for many tutors and almost all have improved at a least a little according to secondary school and primary school coordinators, the tutors themselves, and, in some cases, parents

**Evaluation Question 3. What are the main characteristics of a successful tutor?**

- Successful tutors, that is those who performed well in primary schools, improved their skills and completed the programme, tended to be motivated to help primary children, be cooperative, able to learn, had some ability to interact with adults and children, and had a special skill such as ICT literacy or creative/artistic talent
- There was no detectable gender difference among 'successful' tutors

- The programme seems to work particularly well with those pupils with relatively poor confidence and communication skills

**Evaluation Question 4. Does the payment of financial rewards to pupils have any impact on outcomes?**

- There is no evidence that monetary rewards make any difference over other forms of recognition in terms of completing the programme or adding to the sense of fulfilment or self esteem of the tutor
- All tutors appreciate recognition of some sort for their efforts

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