



REPORT SERIES

**Impact Assessment of
Private Educational Grant-making**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2001, SHINE commissioned the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics to carry out an impact assessment research on private educational grant-making. The aim was to use SHINE grants as case examples to see if private educational grant-making can make a difference to its core beneficiaries – in SHINE’s case the core beneficiaries are under-achieving 7-18 year olds. Specifically, the research set out to: assess if SHINE grants, as case examples of educational grant-making, are having any educational, personal, social or other impacts on the beneficiaries; discuss the various types and levels of impacts across SHINE’s educational programme; and discuss the mechanisms and activities that contribute to the success of an educational grant. The objective was not to assess which individual grant was having the most impact, but rather to find which impacts were the most evident across all grants.

A range of different methods were used, both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative strand consisted of two postal questionnaires. One questionnaire was sent to 17 grantee organisations; 12 organisations returned questionnaires. Another questionnaire was sent to parents of children attending SHINE projects; a total of 64 (out of the possible 1100) were returned. The qualitative strand entailed case studies of eight grants/grantees which included 80 face-to-face interviews with a range of stakeholders and several site-visits. In addition, one grant was selected as a case study for assessing the feasibility of measuring and quantifying impact using SHINE’s evaluation data already available.

SHINE as a Grant-maker

- ◆ Overall, grantee respondents were very satisfied with the way SHINE processes its grants: they were satisfied with the straightforwardness of the grant application; the speed of the decision; and the regularity of SHINE’s communication.
- ◆ Most of the eight members of grantee staff who were interviewed were satisfied with the way SHINE processed its grants. Grantees interviewed were mostly satisfied with the type and quantity of evaluation information requested. Some interviewees said SHINE’s evaluation requirements were less complex compared to their other funders. Two grantees (out of eight) reported some dissatisfaction with the way SHINE communicated its evaluation requirements, which had changed during the project resulting in additional administrative pressure.
- ◆ When asked what would make SHINE grant-making more useful, all grantee respondents (except one) answered ‘longer grants’, two thirds said ‘larger grants’, and almost half said ‘wider grant-making criteria’.

SHINE Grants

- ◆ Half of the grantee respondents reported that SHINE funding was used for a new activity and just over half said it was used to enhance existing activities. This suggests that SHINE is meeting its funding objective, namely to fund replication of projects with proven impact as well as funding new start-ups.

- ◆ Almost half of grantees who responded reported that other funders were supporting the same project activities that SHINE was funding. This is important to bear in mind when seeking to attribute impacts to SHINE grants.

Ensuring Grants Impact

- ◆ Interpretation of ‘what works’ and perceptions of ‘successful grants’ or ‘successful projects’ varied across the stakeholder groups involved in SHINE grant-making: the grant-maker, the grantee, and the beneficiary.
- ◆ At the funder level, SHINE trustees and staff reported the following key elements for making better grants: moving towards replicating successful grants on a larger scale; no longer funding purely arts-based projects unless they are connected to measurable educational outcomes and achievement levels; making larger and longer (three-year) grants; funding projects that have clearly described aims, specifically identified outcomes, and well-planned mechanisms for achieving them; getting things tied down as early in the grant life cycle as possible; having good management and leadership at the grantee level.
- ◆ At the grantee level, the grantee and project staff identified a number of success mechanisms, some relating to SHINE as a funder, others relating to the projects. The reported mechanisms for making better grants were: longer grants; comprehensive yet straightforward grant application process; realistic and well-communicated evaluation requirements. The reported mechanisms for delivering better projects were: high quality staff who have previous work experience with disadvantaged children; inclusive and accessible projects, especially those that encourage participation of at-risk groups (e.g. children in care, excluded children and those with SEN); individualised attention and provision; flexible content that meets and keeps up with the particular learning and personal needs of the children; good leadership and management; good working partnerships with the participating schools.
- ◆ At the beneficiary level, the participating children and their parents reported the following elements as strengths of the projects attended by the children: supportive, caring and understanding staff who are good at helping the children to re-engage with education and learning; individualised attention that the children received; regularity of the educational support provided; interaction with other similar children and sharing experiences; relaxed learning environment that is different from school and yet is structured; subject-focused but innovative and enriching in the way it delivers.

Educational Impacts

- ◆ All grantees responding to the survey reported that SHINE funding was having an impact on the achievement levels of the participating children. The most frequent achievement impacts reported were: improved results in public examinations (reported by 9 out of 10 grantees); improved results in national standardised tests commonly known as SATs (9 out of 9 grantees); and improved teacher reports (7 out of 10

grantees).¹ Seven out of ten grantee respondents thought the SHINE project had improved school attendance of the participating children. Nine out of 11 thought the project had improved children's attitudes towards school and the same proportion thought the project had provided an opportunity for better access to educational facilities.

- ◆ Most parents responding to the survey reported that the SHINE-funded project was having an educational impact on their children. 85% of the parents thought the project had increased their involvement in their child's learning and 76% reported improved achievement rates for their child. 72% thought the project had improved their child's attitude towards school and 57% felt that it had improved their child's attendance at school.
- ◆ During the interviews, most parents and grantees identified a number of 'subject-focused' educational impacts. For example: improving reading skills; improving expression and meaning in reading; helping with spelling and word comprehension; helping with certain subjects; more involvement with science experiments; increasing confidence in mathematics and English; and learning how to use computers and use them as learning tools.
- ◆ Most parents and grantees interviewed also identified a number of 'general' educational impacts. For example: providing support and advocacy; helping the child to become more positive towards attending school; giving the child goals and incentives to achieve; providing full-time school placement after a long period of exclusion; helping with homework; helping to learn with peers; and helping the child to learn new things.
- ◆ Some interviewees reported educational impacts on the participating schools by stating that the SHINE project had contributed to the overall improvement in school level performance and attendance rate. One of the interviewees said the SHINE project had, in addition, increased the school's expectations of itself and had contributed to its higher status in the local community, and had improved some of the behavioural problems at the school.
- ◆ Some interviewees mentioned that SHINE projects had been educational for the parents too, for example when parents go out on visits to museums. Also, the parents' expectations of their children's learning potential had improved.

Personal and Social Impacts

- ◆ Overall, more grantee respondents reported personal and/or social impacts of the SHINE projects than those who reported educational impacts.
- ◆ All grantee respondents agreed that the SHINE project was having some kind of personal and/or social impact on the participating children. The highest impact was reported for 'improved self-confidence' (reported by 11 out of 11 grantees); 'improved

¹ The number of grantee respondents vary as some grantees did not see a particular impact category as relevant to their participating children.

communication levels' (10 out of 10 grantees); 'better relationship with adults' (10 out of 10 grantees); and 'increased motivation' (10 out of 10 grantees).²

- ◆ The results from the parent questionnaire suggest that overall a very high proportion of parents reported some kind of personal and/or social impact on their children. The highest impact was reported for 'improved communication levels' (83% of parents); 'improved self-confidence' (81%); followed by 'improved social relations' (67%).
- ◆ During the interviews, most parents and grantees identified a number of personal and social impacts. For example: increased confidence; helping the child to focus; helping communication with others; helping with social skills and social interaction; and teaching the child to behave appropriately.

Impacts on Grantee Organisations

- ◆ The results from the grantee questionnaire indicate that the highest organisational impacts were reported for 'increased funding leverage'³ (reported by 7 out of 10 grantees) and for 'increased credibility for the grantee organisation' (7 out of 11 grantees). This was followed by two thirds of the grantees reporting SHINE grants as having changed the grantee's organisational aims.

Policy Implications

What projects should be funded?

It is recommended that SHINE should:

- ◆ continue to fund out-of-school-hours educational initiatives as an effective way of raising achievement levels of disadvantaged children;
- ◆ recognise that under-achievement is reported to be highest amongst particular groups of disadvantaged children – children in care, children excluded from mainstream schooling and children with special educational needs; hence funding should be targeted at projects that aim to include and encourage access for these particular groups;
- ◆ continue to take risks and support projects where proven measurable impact may have not been identified in previously funded projects; at times qualitative assessments of impact of a particular project can be as relevant and important as quantitative assessments;
- ◆ take account of government funding initiatives for supporting under-achieving disadvantaged children and identify funding gaps and try to fill those gaps;
- ◆ bear in mind that for some areas of educational provision – e.g. for children in care or for children excluded from school – returns on investment can be slow and this should

² See the previous footnote.

³ This refers to SHINE grant having increased the likelihood of the grantee organisation securing further funding.

not stop the trustees from funding worthwhile projects that have a desperate shortage of funding;

- ◆ review mission fulfilment and progress on funding objectives regularly and seek perspectives from experts and practitioners in the field of education; long-term plans should be flexible enough to allow for re-focusing whilst retaining successful elements of previous grant-making;
- ◆ continue to develop a project sustainability strategy; funded projects should have a chance to carry on once SHINE funding runs out, whether through extension of funding or through guiding the grantees towards other funding sources; even in the case of grants perceived as ‘least successful’, SHINE should develop a supportive exit strategy by pointing grantees in the right direction.

Support and communication with grantees

SHINE should:

- ◆ continue conducting site visits at the application stage as well as during the project life cycle to encourage face-to-face contact and learn more about the grantee organisation and the community it works with; this is very important in the light of the fact that many grantee staff interviewed during this research asked for site-visits by SHINE trustees so they may see for themselves how the projects are helping the participating children; site-visits can be critical, for sometimes even the most effective ‘agents of change’ can only explain what they are doing by saying, ‘come and see’;
- ◆ maintain its flexible approach to unforeseen circumstances and changing needs of the grantees and their service users;
- ◆ recognise that some grantees, in particular those working with refugees or children in care, may need more time to work with their beneficiaries to raise achievement levels.

Impact evaluation requirements

- ◆ Ideally to measure impact in terms of hard data, randomised controlled trials need to be carried out; these can enable causal links to be made between predictor variables and dependent variables such as test results. Quasi-experimental designs using experimental and control or comparison groups can also provide statistically meaningful results. It might be possible for a comparison group of children to be identified, whose progress can be compared with that of the children attending a SHINE-funded activity. However, such an approach is costly and the benefits might not outweigh the costs.
- ◆ SHINE should use this research as a step towards the next level of its evaluation strategy; it should review why SHINE evaluates its grants in the first place, what its evaluation requirements are, and how best to process its evaluation requirements flexibly and yet rigorously; it should develop its evaluation strategy in the light of emerging realities and recommendations in the fields of educational provision and

research; and it should also maintain a balance between seeking quantitative ‘success numbers’ and qualitative ‘success stories’.

- ◆ SHINE should bear in mind that to evaluate scientifically, projects may end up being narrowly defined and inflexibly applied for a limited experimental period; the effort to evaluate grants too rigorously may lead SHINE away from some highly effective potential grantees.
- ◆ The recent evaluation templates/forms developed by SHINE will be helpful in gathering more consistent information for its future grants; however, the needs and resources of the grantees need to be borne in mind when developing and administering the forms. The templates should be a helpful tool for the grantee organisations too, enabling them to learn what impacts their projects are having. Working with and in partnership with the grantees right from the beginning of the application stage, as SHINE does currently, will be important in making sure the evaluation strategy continues to be rigorous and yet pragmatic.
- ◆ One issue that SHINE might like to consider is whether or not to risk some longer-term projects focusing not only on explicit educational outcomes, but on other aspects that may facilitate educational progress. It is possible that enhancing motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence, and greater awareness of the purpose of education, could foster educational progress and hence outcomes. Such intermediary processes are likely to be of fundamental importance.

1. INTRODUCTION

For the last two decades, grant-making trusts and foundations have become increasingly concerned with understanding and assessing the effectiveness of their grant-making. They are also increasingly looking to each other to learn and compare different ways of operating that can further their missions. Both grantee organisations and their funders want to find out whether the programmes that they support are effective and having the desired impact.

Thus, in October 2001 the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics was commissioned by SHINE to carry out an impact assessment research on private educational grant-making. The aim was to use SHINE grants as case examples to see if private educational grant-making can make a difference to its core beneficiaries – in SHINE’s case the core beneficiaries are under-achieving 7-18 year olds. Specifically, the evaluation set out to:

- ◆ assess if SHINE grants, as case examples of educational grant-making, are having any educational, personal, social or other impacts on the beneficiaries across its educational grant programme;
- ◆ discuss the various types and levels of impacts across SHINE’s educational programme;
- ◆ discuss the mechanisms or activities that contribute to the success of an educational grant.

These aims were further refined and the following research questions were developed:

- ◆ Does SHINE educational grant-making make a difference to its core and non-core beneficiaries?
- ◆ If so, what are the various impacts (e.g. educational, personal and social) across the SHINE grants?
- ◆ What mechanisms or activities make a ‘successful’ educational grant according to the various stakeholders involved in SHINE grant-making?

Early in the evaluation, a conceptual framework was developed to guide the evaluation. This was underpinned by the assumption that the impacts across SHINE grants could be divided into four main potential categories: educational, personal, social and organisational impacts.

It was further hypothesised that:

- ◆ Perceptions of impacts across SHINE grants may differ according to the different stakeholders involved in SHINE grant-making. The level or type of impacts may vary depending on who is describing them – the grant-maker, the grantee or the beneficiary.
- ◆ Impacts across SHINE grants may relate variously to the different projects funded. The level or type of impacts may vary depending on contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes of funded projects.
- ◆ As far as finding out what ensures ‘success’ of grants or projects, interpretations of success and success mechanisms, may vary across the stakeholders involved – the grant-maker, the grantee and the beneficiary.

The structure of this report is as follows. Section 2 provides a selective review of relevant literature on ‘underachievement’ and some of the research that has examined the impact of various interventions on pupils’ achievement and progress. Section 3 presents the research methods adopted in the evaluation. The main findings are presented in the subsequent sections. Section 4 focuses on SHINE and its remit; Section 5 focuses on grants made and grantees; Section 6 on various stakeholders’ views of what ensures impact; Section 7 on educational impacts of grants; Section 8 on personal and social impacts of grants; Section 9 on organisational impacts of grants; and Section 10 concludes and presents some implications for future SHINE grant-making policy.

2. RELEVANT LITERATURE

SHINE funds educational projects that target under-achieving children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hence part of the remit of the evaluation research was to carry out a short review of relevant literature on ‘under-achievement’.

Debates about ‘under-achievement’ have changed over the years. There has been a shift away from viewing under-achievement simply as the fault of teachers or pupils towards viewing it as a multi-dimensional and a much more complex phenomenon. For example, is underachievement about an individual not getting the most out of his/her own potential or ability, or is it about an individual not doing well enough compared to his/her peers? There has been one recurrent feature in these debates – that at any given time there is a concern that one group of children is failing to achieve its potential. The concern has related to the achievement of particular social classes, girls or boys, those from particular ethnic groups, those from very disadvantaged backgrounds and so on.

As West & Pennell (2003) note: ‘whilst there may be some consensus about what is meant by levels of attainment or levels of achievement, the concept of ‘underachievement’ has different connotations to different individuals’ (2003: 4). They also note that the concept is not one about which there is much clarity and although it is often used it is rarely clearly defined.

West & Pennell (2003) provide a conceptual framework in which to locate underachievement in schools, namely:

- ◆ Individual factors: intelligence, attitudes, motivation, self-esteem, gender, health (well being and risk behaviours);
- ◆ Family factors: family/household composition, educational level of parents, socio-economic status /income levels, parental involvement;
- ◆ Community and societal factors: social class, ethnicity/race, gender, housing;
- ◆ School characteristics: characteristics of pupils in school, school composition/peer effects, curriculum on offer, school structures.

The concept of underachievement is clearly a multifaceted concept. In any population of school pupils, some will perform less well than others, yet there are links between achievement and a variety of different forms of disadvantage and other factors, including gender, ethnic background, poverty and social class (West & Pennell 2003). Thus, although the term ‘underachievement’ is an apparently straightforward concept, it is in fact problematic. However, for the present purposes the concept will be used in this report to differentiate pupils who are lower attaining than others.

2.1 What do we know about differing levels of achievement?

It is not possible in a short literature review to do justice to the large body of research that has explored the issue of underachievement (for a recent review see West & Pennell 2003) but some of the key findings relating to differential levels of achievement are highlighted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Key differences between levels of achievement amongst different groups

There has been a growing polarisation between those with skills and qualifications to participate in a knowledge-based economy and those without (SEU 2004).

In England and Wales, over three quarters of pupils whose parents were in the higher professional group achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent) in 2002. Of those pupils whose parents were in the routine group, just a third achieved the same level (ONS 2004).

71 per cent of young people whose parents were qualified to degree level and 60 per cent whose parents' highest qualification was a GCE A-level achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, compared with 40 per cent with parents whose highest qualification was below GCE level (ONS 2004).

Those whose parents were in higher professional occupations were almost four times as likely to be participating in higher education as those from routine occupations (DfES 2003).

A teenager from a deprived neighbourhood is five times more likely to go to a failing school and less likely to achieve good qualifications compared to his/her peers (SEU 2001).

In 2001/02, 58 per cent of girls gained five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent), compared with 47 per cent of boys (ONS 2004).

In the UK, the proportion of young women who achieve two or more GCE A-levels (or equivalent) has increased from 20 per cent in 1992/93 to 43 per cent in 2001/02. For young men over the same period, the increase has been from 18 per cent to 34 per cent (ONS 2004).

Young women are more likely than young men to be in full-time education at 18 (DfES 2003).

In 2003, the proportion of boys in England reaching the required standard for English at all key stages was lower than that for girls, particularly at Key Stages 2 and 3. The difference between the proportions of girls and boys reaching the expected level in tests and teacher assessments for mathematics and science was less pronounced (SEU 2004).

African Caribbean boys and Pakistani and Bangladeshi students are less likely to leave school with 5 good GCSEs and are more likely to live in households below 50% of median income (SEU 2004).

In 2001, only 8% of children in care achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-C grades, compared to half of all young people (SEU 2003).

Children in care have poor results in Key Stage tests at age seven, 11 and 14. Just 1% go to university (SEU 2003).

In England, out of 6,500 youths who left care in 2001, 63% had no qualifications (Princes Trust 2002).

In 2001/02, over 10,000 children in Great Britain were permanently excluded from schools (ONS 2004).

Only 12% who had been persistent truants in year 11 were in full-time education at 18, this compares with 46% for those who had not truanted. A third of those who were persistent truants in year 11 were not in education, training or employment at 18 (DfES 2003).

A fifth of those who were excluded from school or achieved no GCSE grades A*-C in year 11 were not in education, training or employment at 18 (DfES 2003).

Only one in seven pupils with special needs and one in 20 with statements gets five or more GCSEs at A*-C grades (DfES 2004).

Adults with poor basic literacy and numeracy skills are five times more likely to be unemployed than those with adequate skills (DfES 1999).

2.2 Costs of low levels of achievement

West & Pennell (2003) note that the 'costs of underachievement are huge'. 'For the individual, the results of lower achievement can be measured in terms of lost opportunity, unfulfilled potential and reduced quality of life. For society as a whole there are the social and financial costs, both direct and indirect, in combating underachievement and disaffection, including crime, as well as the payments of benefits such as income support' (2003: 16). Figure 2 gives some of these costs.

Figure 2. Costs of low levels of achievement

The annual cost of school exclusions to the public services has been estimated at £406 million (SEU 2001).

An Audit Commission report calculated that if one in ten offenders received effective early intervention (including educational intervention) the annual saving would be in excess of £100 million (Audit Commission 2004).

Higher risk of future unemployment – adults with poor basic literacy and numeracy skills are five times more likely to be unemployed than those with adequate skills, (DfES 1999).

In 2001, 3.5 million workers in England struggled with reading, writing and everyday maths which cost the UK businesses nearly £5 billion and the UK economy as a whole around £10 billion (DfES 2001).

A lack of skilled workers, educational under-achievement and shortage of relevant skills have a direct impact on the supply of talented individuals in the workforce, contributing to the productivity gap between the UK and its international competitors (SEU 2004).

2.3 Factors affecting attainment

There is some evidence to suggest that parents from the lower socio-economic groups are less likely to be closely involved with their children's education than parents from the higher socio-economic groups. This may be due to the fact that parents from the lower socio-economic backgrounds may be less aware of strategies for encouraging their children

to learn. Research suggests that levels of parental home support and involvement in a child's learning (such as parents reading to their children, books at home, library attendance, parent-child relationships) can have a powerful influence upon a child's educational attainment (Desforges 2003).

Sammons et al. (2003) suggest that what parents do at home is more important than who they are. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project, funded by DfES and based in the Institute of Education, is a substantial longitudinal study that assesses the progress and development of children between the ages of three and seven years. It investigates the contribution of individual and family characteristics on children's attainment. It found that while parents' social class and levels of education make a difference, the quality of the home learning environment is the key factor (Sammons et al. 2003).

Brooks et al. (2002) in a study concerned with children with literacy difficulties concluded that normal schooling does not enable slow readers to catch up and that extra tuition (e.g. through appropriately trained reading partners) is needed to improve their phonological and comprehension skills. However, the pupil's comprehension skills have to be directly targeted and working on the pupil's self-confidence has to be included alongside working on the reading (Brooks et al. 2002).

Study support appears to be one clear way to improve levels of achievement and progress. This includes many diverse programmes and involves pupils in out of school learning of various types. These might include subject-focused study support (e.g. mathematics, English), study skills, sport, aesthetic, peer education (e.g. helping with paired reading), drop-in (e.g. homework club), mentoring and study centres (MacBeath et al. 2001).

MacBeath et al. (2001) carried out a major evaluation of study support involving over 8,000 pupils. Pupils were tracked between the ages of 11/12 and 14/15. The study found evidence that pupils who participated in study support did better than expected from baseline measures of academic attainment, attitudes to school and attendance at school. There appeared to be an independent effect of study support at GCSE, with attainment being more affected by 'subject-focused, drop-in provision and Easter revision courses' (2001: 7). It should be stressed, however, that the study compared those who participated in study support with those who did not and there could be differences between these two groups that may also help explain the differences observed. The researchers noted that there was a lower likelihood of participation by those with low self-esteem.

An evaluation study has indicated that provision of ICT approaches in schools can enhance attainment of pupils. However, they tend to work if they are precisely targeted – if children are left to find their own way through computer packages, this has little effect (Harrison et al. 2002).

Sharp et al. (2002) examined the impact of an initiative known as 'Playing for Success' which involved establishing study support centres in professional football clubs. The centres use the medium and environment of football to support work in literacy, numeracy and ICT and focus on 'underachieving' pupils between the ages of 10/11 and 13/14. The initial numeracy and reading comprehension scores of those involved were found to be well below average for their age. The evaluation used nationally standardised tests of numeracy

and reading comprehension specifically designed for the evaluation to assess pupils' progress. It involved comparing pupils who had participated in the scheme with a control group who had not. It was found that on average the participants made significant progress in basic skills and this was particularly significant in relation to numeracy and ICT. Interestingly, the beneficial effects were not affected by pupils' gender, deprivation, ethnicity, fluency in English or special educational needs.

2.4 Measuring impact

This section very briefly discusses some of the conceptual and empirical difficulties that may be encountered in any evaluation research that tries to quantify impact.

Bradford and Robson (1995) in discussing some of the evaluation problems associated with evaluating government initiatives, refer to what they term the six 'C's'. These are:

- the *counterfactual* problem: what would have happened anyway, in the absence of a specific intervention;
- the *confound* problem: outcomes are affected by many policies other than the specific one being evaluated;
- the *contextual* problem: the different local conditions affecting the programme being studied;
- the *contiguity* problem: intervention can have either positive or negative spillover effects;
- the *combinatorial* problem: programmes and policies are mixed in different ways in different places and at different times;
- the problem of *changes*: changes can take place between the start and the completion of interventions.

These difficulties associated with evaluation are of key importance in this evaluation as well.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data collection comprised two questionnaire surveys. One questionnaire was sent to all 17 grantees in receipt of SHINE funding and was to be completed by the manager overseeing the SHINE project at the time. The aim of the grantee questionnaire was to find out about the impacts of SHINE grants on the under-achieving children targeted and on the grantee organisations themselves. The other questionnaire was sent to all grantees with a request to distribute the questionnaire to all parents of the children attending the SHINE project at the time. The aim of the parents' questionnaire was to find out about the impacts of SHINE-funded projects on the under-achieving children targeted. Pre-paid and addressed envelopes were included to facilitate the return of the questionnaires to the research team at the London School of Economics. Altogether 1100 parent questionnaires were sent to the grantee organisations for distribution to the parents.

There was a high response rate to the grantee questionnaires (12 out of 17 or 71%). It was not possible to establish the response rate for the parents' questionnaire. Although 1100 questionnaires were sent to grantee organisations for distribution to parents, there is evidence that some did not distribute the questionnaires, because of the workload, timing of the survey, and low levels of English proficiency amongst refugee parents. Two of the grantees only distributed a proportion of the questionnaires. Altogether 64 questionnaires were returned from parents whose children had attended 11 SHINE-funded projects (out of the possible 19). Out of those 64 respondents, 57 were parents whose children were attending subject-focused projects funded by SHINE. Seven were parents whose children were attending non-subject-focused projects funded by SHINE. Given the small number of parents' questionnaires returned, it is important that the findings reported are treated with caution and seen as being indicative as opposed to definitive.

In addition and as part of the quantitative data collection, one SHINE grant was selected as a grant case study for demonstrating the difficulties with quantifying impacts of an educational grant accurately and for discussing how best to increase the potential accuracy for measuring grants impact. The quantitative data used for this purpose were those already available in SHINE grant evaluation files.

For the qualitative data collection, eight SHINE grants (out of the possible 19⁴) were selected as case studies. The selection criteria – type of funded projects, age of children targeted, and expected project outcomes – were aimed at ensuring that the case studies would be as far as possible representative of all the SHINE grants. For each selected grant, several interviews were conducted with a sample of the stakeholders involved and several site-visits were carried out. Overall there were 80 semi-structured face-to-face interviews across all stakeholders involved – SHINE staff and trustees, grantee staff, project volunteers, parents, participating children and headteachers. The number of interviews varied across the case studies and the length of interviews ranged from 15 to 150 minutes; most were tape-recorded. Of the 80 interviews conducted, 17 were with grantee management staff, 13 with parents, three with SHINE trustees, three with SHINE staff, two

⁴ Overall, 19 grants were being delivered by 17 grantees – one grantee delivered three projects at the time of this research.

with headteachers, eight with project managers, 30 with children and four with project volunteer tutors/mentors.

To ensure some level of consistency across interviews, several interview protocols were designed, one for each stakeholder group. The protocols ensured that similar questions were asked in the interviews with the same stakeholder group. For example, all parents were asked the same questions. Each protocol, however, was designed with due consideration for the contexts and needs of the interviewees: whether the interviewee knew about SHINE, the grant and/or the grant-funded project; whether they could comment on impacts of the grants/projects; and whether they could comment on success mechanisms of the grants/projects.

4. SHINE AND ITS EDUCATIONAL GRANT- MAKING

4.1 SHINE's remit

SHINE is a new charity set up in the late 90s to fund educational support programmes for children and young people from the most disadvantaged parts of the Greater London area. They fund organisations working with under-achieving 7-18 year olds from these areas. SHINE gives great importance to value for money and proven educational impact.

I strongly believe, partly from my training as an economist, that a key to sustaining or improving a country's growth rate economically is through a better education system, this is absolutely vital. [A SHINE trustee]

SHINE may be described as a new breed of grant-making - recently referred to as venture philanthropy (The Guardian 2002; Anheier & Leat 2002) - which is emerging from the City and bringing the culture and language of venture capital to philanthropy and, hence, focusing on value for money and proven impact.

SHINE funders and trustees are mostly from the financial sector and are interested in funding projects with clearly stated expected impacts. SHINE operates as a business, 'rigorously evaluating the organisations and projects we fund to ensure the most effective intervention into young lives and the best possible value for money' (SHINE website 2004). They then invest money into replicating projects that are having proven impact.

We've stuck almost religiously to the principles we said we would do when we started, and they include three things. Firstly, we're trying to help very disadvantaged people have a chance through education. Secondly, we try to only finance initiatives that we think are going to have a measurable outcome. Thirdly, we monitor the programmes we finance pretty intensely. Also, we believe and sell ourselves as being from the leading edge of the modern financial world and will manage any donations in a sophisticated way. [A SHINE trustee]

Another distinguishing characteristic of SHINE is that all its operational costs are funded by the trustees and hence every penny of the donations goes to the funded projects.

SHINE's funding sources include high profile annual Benefit Dinners. Its Inaugural Benefit Dinner, in November 2001, and the subsequent November 2002 and 2003 Benefit Dinners, each raised in excess of one million pounds net. SHINE has committed over £4 million to projects since August 2000 to help over 6,500 children in nearly 250 schools. All grants committed are to organisations providing services for disadvantaged 7 to 18 year olds.

SHINE predominantly funds projects. They wish to fund projects that have the following key elements:

- ◆ the main focus is on educational subjects, especially promoting literacy, numeracy and science;

- ◆ content and methodology will excite and engage participants, making creative use of IT where appropriate;
- ◆ there are clear and measurable target educational outcomes - principally this will mean linking to standardised tests (at primary level) and GCSEs or a recognised equivalent (at secondary level);
- ◆ a significant number of children/young people will be supported;
- ◆ these children/young people themselves want to improve their situation;
- ◆ the project will be sufficiently long term to support sustainable improvement;
- ◆ families of participants are linked to the project in a way which supports their child's learning;
- ◆ there is an appropriate use of volunteers;
- ◆ the project budget represents value for money (SHINE website 2004).

SHINE wishes to build long term relationships and partnerships with the organisations it funds, therefore the majority of their grants are in excess of £20,000. They fund new start ups, pilots and development or replication of projects. They also fund core costs.

According to the trustees interviewed, SHINE's remit has moved towards a particular direction since its first grant was awarded in August 2000, as described below.

Towards replication

In its initial phase SHINE was set up to help children from underprivileged backgrounds do the best they can educationally. In its subsequent phases, however, SHINE's funding objectives have become more focused and moved towards replication of projects that have been shown to be successful. This move was viewed as a realistic narrowing of SHINE's funding focus, and yet was felt to be in need of being balanced with making sure that funding remains ambitious in its scope and impact - funding what is possible, needed and achievable.

We are narrowing our focus and doing less but doing them better. We want to do more than just a scatter gun approach which is just to fund a whole range of things and hope that they'll all or some of them come in good. [A SHINE staff member]

Towards finding and filling funding gaps

Another constant challenge has been making sure that SHINE grant-making fills in the potential gaps in the public educational funding without substituting the statutory role of the State. Here there are two further sub-challenges: how to identify where government funding is lacking or not working, and how to make sure the gaps or problem zones identified will be filled in and dealt with successfully as opposed to re-inventing the wheel.

The challenge is how do you find the gaps? How do you plug them in such a way that you don't do what should be provided by the State? How do you spread yourself in such a way to have a meaningful impact? Because anyone can just fund tons of things but it might actually be spread so thin. [A SHINE staff member]

Even when funding gaps are identified, as one trustee pointed out, SHINE cannot guarantee funding a much needed project, especially when the project does not show potential return in terms of its economy of scale and logistics.

There are systematic funding gaps but I don't know how you'd get around them in our funding frameworks. Kids in care, for example, is a huge problem and where funding is much needed. But we haven't been able to find a scalable model. And there is a huge logistical difficulty here, because kids in care are a moving population. It's very hard for a charity of our scale to get its head round that.

[A SHINE trustee]

Towards particular project types

Two trustees pointed out particular projects types – arts-based projects, mentoring, and capital/building projects – that SHINE no longer wishes to fund. The main reason for deciding to limit the type of projects funded was that SHINE has moved from its initial experimental phase, when projects covered a broad spectrum, to its second phase, when funding has narrowed towards projects that have shown success and are replicable on a wider scale.

Most SHINE staff and trustees agreed that their least favourite grants, in terms of their educational impact, were either arts-based projects or projects that did not have any specific educational outcomes but rather had broad/general learning outcomes.

One trustee, however, indicated that he would be willing to fund arts or sports projects, provided they were used as educational incentives and had specific educational outcomes.

In so far as entertainment, arts and sports go, I'm a big fan of sports which we don't do anything about. If they could be used as rewards, I'm very much a fan of using sports, but if they are to be used in their own right, I don't think it will work.

[A SHINE trustee]

A SHINE member of staff explained that if SHINE no longer wished to fund mentoring or arts-based projects, this did not mean that these types of project are not valuable. Rather, it means that these types of projects do not meet SHINE's focused funding objective, namely to fund projects with specific and measurable educational outcomes.

Towards 'best-practice' fundraising

From the start, SHINE wanted to be a best practice organisation in terms of its fundraising. To do so, the trustees decided that fundraising would initially be minimal and depend predominantly on funds from the trustees. According to one of them, this initial stage was used as a learning process to find projects that were '*worthy of going out and raising funds for*'.

Another trustee mentioned that one of SHINE's distinguishing features is the fact that 'every penny of raised funds goes to the projects' and that this has been

a best practice and a sound decision from a business perspective because down the line that has helped us with our fundraising. [A SHINE trustee]

The same trustee thought SHINE’s fundraising strategy needed to be improved further as SHINE moves towards replicating its successful grants on a bigger scale.

Our fundraising has been very limited. In reality it hasn’t mattered as we suffer from surplus cash. So we don’t need to have more money. But as we go towards replication and if we really want to replicate in a big way, we need a broader funding base. We need to think how to turn our incredible success at benefit dinners into even more incredible success. In addition we need lots more small dinners with celebrities that might give more money. [A SHINE trustee]

Another trustee described SHINE’s current fundraising as ‘pretty good and ahead of where we thought we would be in terms of money raised’ and considering SHINE’s relatively small size. He did, however, argue that the fundraising has to reach deeper into the financial world where most of the current patrons of SHINE come from. He mentioned the creation of the ‘Friends of SHINE’, a core community of SHINE patrons and supporters from mainly the financial world, who are to go out into their own companies and act as ambassadors for SHINE.

Another trustee agreed that SHINE’s fundraising needs more patrons, but mentioned that the fundraising needs to also ‘penetrate into worlds outside the financial sector where there’s people with wealth and famous people who have devotion to what SHINE is doing’.

4.2 Grantees satisfaction with SHINE’s grant-processing

The grantee questionnaire sent to the managers overseeing the SHINE-funded projects, asked them to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of SHINE’s grant-processing. Table 1 shows their responses.

As can be seen, overall the project managers were satisfied with the way in which SHINE processed its grants. As far as specific grant-processing activities are concerned, all grantee respondents were satisfied with the straightforwardness of the grant application; the speed of the decision; and the regularity of SHINE’s communications.

Table 1. Number of grantees’ rating SHINE grant-processing as ‘very good’ or ‘good’

Grant-processing aspects	Number of grantees rating grant-processing as ‘very good’ or ‘good’
Grant application straightforwardness	12
Speed of decision	12
Regularity of SHINE’s communication	12
Support when writing grant proposal	11
Support with grant evaluation	11
Quality of SHINE’s communication	11
N=12	

The project managers from the grantee organisations were also asked in the questionnaire to respond to a set of questions on how SHINE grant-processing could be more useful. Their responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Grantees reporting how SHINE grants could be more useful

SHINE grants would be more useful if ...	Number of grantees saying how grants could be more useful	N
Grants were longer	9	10
Grants were larger	6	9
Criteria for grant-making were wider	4	9
Application process was simpler	3	9
Payment was faster	1	8

N is less than 12 as not all respondents answered all questions.

As can be seen, almost all respondents felt that it would be useful if SHINE grants were longer; two-thirds would like to see larger grants. Fewer respondents identified other changes that would make the grants more useful.

SHINE gives great significance to building long-term partnerships with the organisations it funds. The grantee questionnaire therefore included questions on how SHINE communicated and interacted with the grantees. Table 3 reports on the responses made by the project managers of the grantee organisations.

As can be seen, overall, respondents were highly satisfied with the relationship that they had with SHINE. All reported that they had a ‘good working relationship with SHINE’ and almost all agreed that the relationship was hands-on and flexible. All but two respondents disagreed with the statement that there were ‘communication barriers’.

Table 3. Number of grantees agreeing with statements about relationship with SHINE

Relationship with SHINE	Number of grantees agreeing with statements
Good working relationship	12
Hands-on relationship	10
Flexible relationship	10
Communication barriers	2
N=12	

A similar trend of overall satisfaction with the relationship with SHINE emerged in the interviews with the grantee staff, though the interviews provided more details on the nature of the relationship. Overall, most interviewees were satisfied with the type and nature of the relationships that their grantee organisations had with SHINE.

One interviewee described their organisation’s relationship with SHINE as ‘*neither too close nor too distant*’, but certainly more hands-on than their other funders. The interviewee mentioned that SHINE had its own evaluation officer who met the grantee staff regularly and that this regularity and hands-on relationship was good as it allowed SHINE to ‘*see what happens on the ground*’.

It's been a professional relationship. Whenever [SHINE] want anything, we give it to them. It's closer than some of our other funders who will give you money and then say come back in 12 months and tell us how it's gone. Out of all our other funders, SHINE are the closest in terms of a professional relationship.

[A senior staff member of a grantee organisation]

A project manager described SHINE's relationship with the grantee as helpful and supportive. He reported that there was a lot of paper work but not as much as required by their public funders. The interviewee said that SHINE was not over-bearing with their paper requirements and that the information that SHINE requested was rigorous.

They've chased us for information and data. It's required a lot of paper work, a lot more than expected, but we accepted that. They haven't interfered and haven't been over-bearing. It's been easier working with them than DfES [the Department for Education and Skills] which has more monitoring forms. But SHINE has more rigour and is not into soft data.

[Project manager of a grantee organisation]

Another project manager from the same grantee organisation agreed that SHINE had been very helpful all the way through their grant-processing – from the grant application phase to monitoring and evaluation phase. She mentioned that although SHINE was very hands-on at the early stages of grant implementation, once established, SHINE became less hands-on.

Once established, they [SHINE] don't come that much and begin to have a light touch and we quite liked that idea.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

According to one of the SHINE staff, the responses of the grantees to this research would vary under a number of contexts. For example, if SHINE has agreed to a grant extension, then the respective grantee would view their relationship with SHINE in very positive terms. This is an inevitable point of bias in any research of this kind.

The groups we've said yes you can have some more money, will probably fill in the questionnaires quite positively because they feel good at that moment. But we've also said no to some groups, so they may be less positive. That's just life.

[A SHINE staff member]

When asked about the relationship of SHINE with the current grantees, one of the SHINE staff described it as a mixture of 'hands-on and hands-off'. In terms of the delivery of the project, and once a grantee has been assessed as capable in delivering, the relationship is 'hands-off'. SHINE then becomes 'an interested grant-maker in a non invasive way'. However, in terms of monitoring and evaluating data and proof of impact, SHINE's relationship with the grantees was described as 'very much hands-on' and a 'chasing-up role'.

As far as communication with the grantees go, one of the SHINE staff described a varied picture depending on the grantee organisations. He noted that although SHINE had incorporated and is aware of its grantees' diverse needs, for pragmatic reasons it had ended up producing the same evaluation bench marks for all its grantees.

Some are very good communicators, both written and verbal, but others are not at all good. We originally tried to respond to our grantees' diverse needs but have ended up boxing them a bit because of our needs and also because in some cases they asked for that. They wanted to know what is exactly expected of them. They would ask: have you got a form, that would be really helpful.

[A SHINE staff member]

Another SHINE staff member described the relationship with the grantees as 'hands-on' but thought it could be closer. She would prefer a *'more of a mutual trust and exploration type relationship rather than a 'you will now give me this' sort of relationship'*.

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5. GRANTEES AND GRANTS AWARDED

This section covers three themes: grants, grantee organisations, and expected grants outcomes. The characteristics of the grants awarded will be covered through discussing the type of project activities funded, size and duration of the grants, and whether the grants have been repeated for any of the grantee organisations. The characteristics of the grantee organisations will be covered through discussing the range of grantees' organisational aims, their target users, and their size. The range of expected grants outcomes – such as educational, personal, social and any other outcomes – and their frequency across the grants will be discussed to see which outcomes were the most frequent ones.

The data sources were the grantee questionnaires, SHINE grant files, and face-face interviews with SHINE staff/trustees and grantee staff.

5.1 Grants awarded

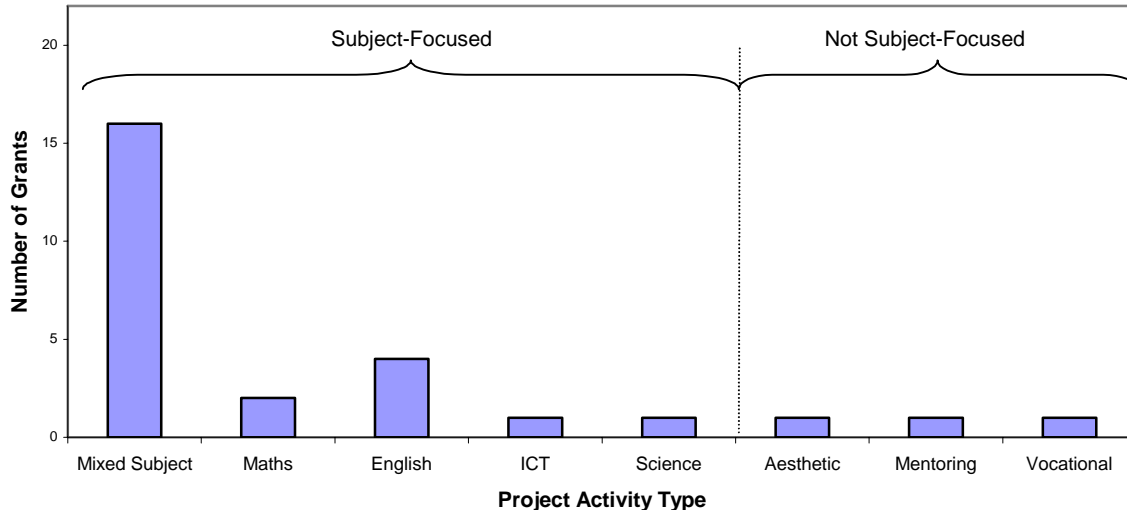
By the winter of 2003, SHINE had awarded 28 grants to 26 grantee organisations. All grantees were working with 7 to 18 year olds and all, except two, were operating in the London area. The grantees operating outside London were early recipients of SHINE's grants. When this research was commissioned in October 2001, SHINE had by that time awarded 19 grants to 17 grantee organisations.

This section focuses on all the 28 grants and not just the 19 grants and 17 grantees included in this research. The themes discussed in this section are: the type of projects funded by SHINE, the size of SHINE grants, and parallel or repeat grants.

Projects funded by SHINE

According to SHINE records, apart from a one-off capital grant that was used for building work, all SHINE grants fund educational project activities, with some covering core costs. All the 27 projects funded were educational support activities that can be divided into two main groups: those specifically focused on academic/school subjects; and those providing learning support in general. Figure 3 gives details of the number of grants and types of project activity funded.

Figure 3. Number of grants and type of project activity funded (N=27)



Of the 27 grants funding project activities, 24 (89%) funded subject-focused activities and 3 (11%) fund non-subject-focused activities. Looked at in more detail, we can see from Figure 3 that 16 grants (nearly six out of ten) funded projects that focused on delivering a mixture of educational subjects and 8 grants (just under a third) funded projects that delivered activities focused on one specific curricular subject (mathematics in the case of two, English in the case of four, and ICT and science in the case of one each). Most SHINE projects have targeted primary and secondary school pupils (65% and 25% of grants respectively).

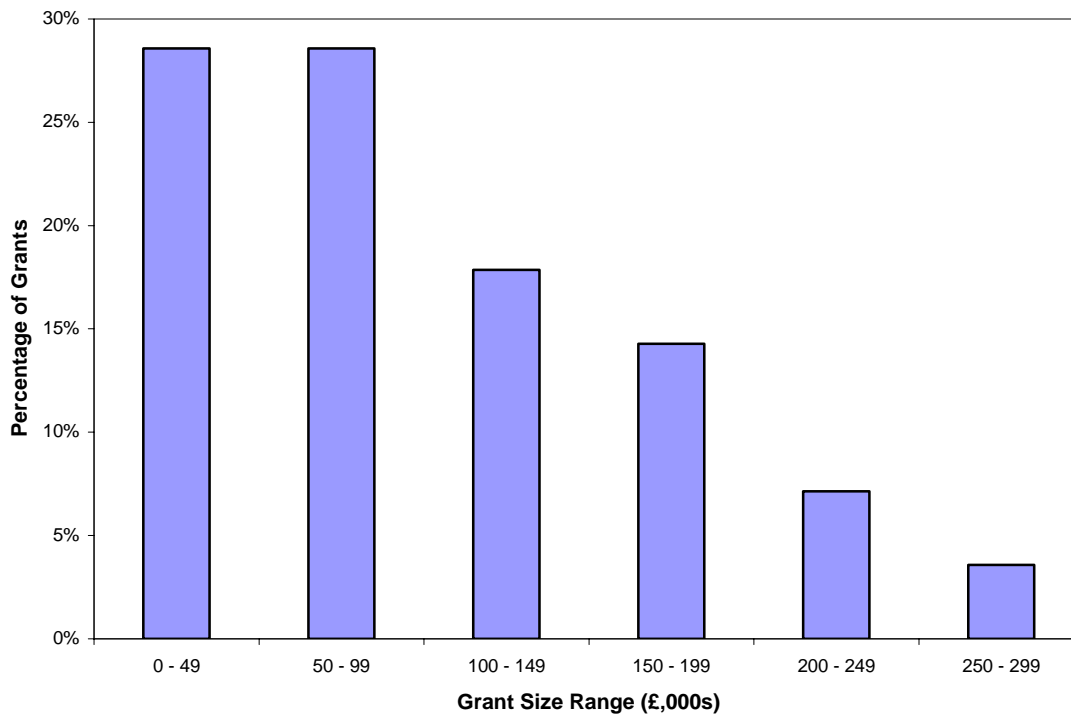
Turning now to the responses of grantee questionnaire survey, out of the 12 grantee respondents, ten reported that the SHINE funding was for project activity; nine reported that the grant supported administration or running costs and one stated that it was for covering construction/building costs. In terms of whether the grant was to fund a new activity, half of the respondents reported that it was funding a new activity, seven said it was funding enhanced levels of an already existing activity, and two said it was for keeping an already existing activity going.⁵

Size and duration of grants

By winter 2003, SHINE had awarded 28 grants to 26 grantee organisations. A high proportion of these grants (71%) were over £50,000 and a low proportion were below £20,000 (7%). Almost half (43%) were over £100,000. Figure 4 presents these findings graphically.

⁵ The numbers add up to more than 12 as more than one response was possible.

Figure 4. Size of SHINE grants (£,000s) (N=28)



The duration of grants ranged from 10 months to 6 years⁶ with more than one third being three-year grants and about one quarter two-year grants.

Parallel and repeat grants

Grantee questionnaire responses showed that almost half of the projects funded by SHINE were also receiving financial support from other funders. This is an important finding for assessing SHINE grants impacts. The interviews emphasised this point further. For most of the eight grantee organisations interviewed, project funding was not managed separately and was mixed in the same basket, making it difficult to isolate the impact of SHINE grants.

Our funds are all in the same support basket. It contains support from a number of public sector contracts and a mixture of charitable trusts and companies, about 35% of the income comes from the private sector, about 45% comes from statutory public sector, and the rest comes from wherever.

[Senior member of a grantee organisation]

Out of the 12 grantee respondents, four have reapplied to SHINE for future funding. All of them have been successful. One grantee stated that they were “*encouraged by SHINE to re-apply as we have built a strong relationship with them*”. Of the eight who did not reapply for a grant, the reasons given included the following:

⁶ Six year grants were those that had originally been three year grants but the grant had been renewed (either extended or developed) for three further years.

- ◆ the respondent saying they are looking for a suitable project, or a similar response (2 respondents);
- ◆ the respondent thinking that SHINE only awards two-year grants (2 respondents);
- ◆ the respondent saying their organisation will reapply to SHINE (2 respondents); and
- ◆ the respondent thinking SHINE no longer funds projects outside London (1 respondent).⁷

5.2 Grantee organisations

Organisational aims

The organisational aims of the 12 grantee respondents can be divided into the seven following categories:

- ◆ Broad educational/learning focus
e.g. *‘to reintegrate the child back into mainstream schooling when appropriate’*
- ◆ Specific educational subjects focus
e.g. *‘additional literacy support for primary age school children’*
- ◆ Training tutors/volunteers
e.g. *‘to train volunteers to teach children’*
- ◆ Socio-economic development
e.g. *‘to create opportunities for people to play an active part in their community’*
- ◆ Emphasising programme evaluation
e.g. *‘to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programmes as models to be replicated’*
- ◆ Pastoral care
e.g. *‘to empower children and young people to overcome personal problems and difficulties’*
- ◆ Advocacy
e.g. *‘advocating on behalf of children to get them a place in a mainstream school’*

Table 4 presents the number of grantees indicating each of the above organisational aims for their organisations. As shown in the Table, all 12 grantees listed at least one educational aim. These were either broadly described (e.g. ‘to increase children’s confidence in education’) or more specifically stated (e.g. ‘to raise standards in literacy and numeracy’). Nearly half of the grantee respondents listed at least one aim that consisted of focusing on national curriculum subjects. This is an important focus, although unsurprising, as one of SHINE’s funding objectives is to fund projects that have their main focus on educational subjects.

⁷ The total does not add up to 8 as one respondent gave no response to the question ‘reasons for not re-applying’.

Table 4. Organisational aims of grantee organisations identified by the grantee respondents

Organisational aim	Number of grantees identifying aims
Broad educational/learning focus	12
Specific educational focus (national curriculum subjects)	5
Socio-economic development	4
Emphasis on programme evaluation	2
Pastoral care	2
Advocacy	2
Training tutors/volunteers	1
N=12	

Total adds up to more than 12 as more than one response was possible.

Several other organisational aims emerged during the interviews held with senior and/or management staff of the grantee organisations. One was the issue of ‘replication’ as a key organisational strategy. For one of the grantees, potential for replication was one of the key criteria when making a decision on what projects to deliver. A senior member of this grantee organisation listed three criteria when choosing projects.

First, would the schools want it, secondly, does it involve business and, thirdly, if it works in one or two schools, would it work across all schools in the borough? Because there’s no point in doing this stuff by one-off. We’re looking for production line stuff. If it meets those three criteria, I’ll then go and find the money for it and we will pilot it and off we go. [Senior member of a grantee organisation]

Another organisational aim that came up in an interview was that of ‘adopting models’ from the educational research field into the way the grantee delivers a project.

We’ve tried to adopt an accelerated learning model. And a lot of the drive behind that is to give the children a sense of themselves as learners. So I suppose another spin-off is giving them the tools to actually improve their learning, letting them understand what happens in the process of learning.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Target users

Grantee respondents were also asked about their target users. Their responses are shown in Table 5. As shown, of the 12 respondents, half identified their target users as primary and/or secondary school pupils, and five identified their target users as disadvantaged children/youth; four identified their target users as a specific group of disadvantaged youth/children (e.g. in care/having special educational needs/gifted & talented/excluded).

Table 5. Grantees' target users identified by the grantee respondents

Grantees' target users	Number of grantees identifying target users
Primary and/or secondary school children	6
Disadvantaged children/young people	5
Children/young people with SEN/excluded/in care/gifted & talented	4
Underachieving children/young people	3
Schools/colleges/universities	1
School children in a London Borough	1
Children from lone parent families	1
N=12	

Total adds up to more than 12 as more than one response was possible.

It was also found that as far as meeting the SHINE funding priority is concerned – to fund organisations that work with disadvantaged under-achieving 7 to 18 year olds - seven out of 12 grantee respondents identified their target users as ‘disadvantaged youth/children’ and/or as ‘a specific group of disadvantaged youth/children’. The remainder identified their target users as ‘primary and/or secondary school children’ without any reference to their level of disadvantage.

During the interviews, however, all grantee staff (from the eight organisations included in the case studies) referred to their target users as being ‘a group in need’ or ‘highly disaffected’ or ‘having multiple disadvantage’.

There is a high intake of refugees, lots of social poverty indicators, lots of EAL [English as an Additional Language] difficulties, lots of kids with special needs, autistic children, hearing impairment, all sorts of, right across the board really. It's a very diverse and a very mobile population which is the situation right across this borough. It's a needy group. [Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Organisation size

The size of the grantee organisations in receipt of SHINE funding varied. Out of the 12 grantee respondents, three had fewer than 10 paid staff, three had 11 to 20, three had 21 to 40, and three had more than 200 paid staff, when funding was initially given. This means that the size of SHINE grantees varies greatly from very small to medium-sized to very large organisations.

The grantee organisations also differed in terms of their use of volunteers. One grantee organisation had no volunteers, whilst seven (around two-thirds) reported that they had between 1 and 20 volunteers, and three (a quarter) reported that they had more than 400 volunteers. In short, in some grantee organisations, much of the work is done by paid staff, whereas in others, most of the work depends on volunteers.

5.3 Expected outcomes of grants

The projects funded by SHINE grants have expected outcomes agreed at the application stage. These outcomes are predominantly educational.

All of the 27⁸ grants-funded projects have at least one expected educational outcome. Most of the 27 grants are funding projects with measurable achievement data as their expected outcome. There are also a few grants with personal, social, or vocational expected outcomes, in addition to expected educational outcomes.

Almost all grantee and project staff who were interviewed mentioned some form of expected educational outcomes. The majority of these interviewees, however, mentioned other additional expected outcomes, for example, personal or social outcomes, not represented as prominently in SHINE grant files.

Self-esteem is another outcome of the project [besides improved attainment]. We've been very successful with a number of the older disaffected boys. As a result of the SHINE project, their behaviour in school improved because they didn't want to lose their place in the project. How you demonstrate those knock-on effects back into the classroom is very difficult but I did try a quantitative assessment with teachers and asked, have you noticed any distinct improvements in self-esteem, behaviour, motivation, co-operation. A lot of the children had made a lot of progress and the teachers were saying that, for example, some of the pupils were being more positive in their attitude to learning, and how this had come from their commitment to the SHINE project. [Project manager from a grantee organisation]

The responses to the grantee questionnaire showed a similar emphasis on outcomes. Out of the 12 grantee respondents, 11 listed at least one quantitative expected educational outcome that was similar to outcomes agreed at the SHINE grant application stage. One grantee listed only expected outcomes that were not represented in the SHINE grant files. Ten grantees listed expected outcomes in addition to those represented in the SHINE grant files. These additional outcomes included 'broader educational/learning', 'personal' and 'social' outcomes for the children, as well as 'organisational management' and 'organisational learning' outcomes for the grantees.

The somewhat different emphasis between the expectation of SHINE and those of grantees could be related to additional outcomes becoming important for the project once it is underway, or to other outcomes closely associated with the expected ones.

⁸ The total number of the grants-funded projects is less than 28 as one grant was a one-off capital grant, and the total includes only those awarded until the winter of 2003.

6. SEEKING GRANT AND PROJECT IMPACTS

In this section, perceptions of mechanisms and contexts that lead to successful grants or successful funded projects will be examined from the perspectives of SHINE trustees/staff, the grantee staff, and the parents of the participating children. The success mechanisms for grant-making, as reported by SHINE staff and trustees, will be discussed under four categories: organisational mechanisms that SHINE has or is implementing for the sake of better grant-making (such as managing growth and replication of successful grants); preferences for particular type of projects; preferences for particular grantees; and preferences for and implementing particular evaluation mechanisms.

The success project mechanisms that SHINE grantees reported will be discussed under two main categories: what project activities need to be funded by educational grant-makers like SHINE; and grantees' perceptions of SHINE evaluation requirements and how they could be improved.

The success project mechanisms that parents of the participating children reported will be discussed under several categories: project content; project staff and resources; project environment; project users; project evaluation; project management; and project sustainability.

Sources of data were the face-to-face interviews with the various stakeholders, the grantee questionnaires (12 respondents) and the parent questionnaires (64 respondents).

6.1 SHINE: Success and impact

SHINE staff and trustees were asked similar questions to get their views on some of the key elements that contribute to grants' success and ensure their impact. The sources of data were the interviews with SHINE staff and trustees.

Organisational success mechanisms

All SHINE trustees and staff interviewed agreed that the most important element for SHINE as an organisation has been how to manage replication and growth. SHINE trustees have come to agree on a core group of projects thought to be good projects with proven success. The current challenge is to ensure these projects can work in a wider context.

Our edge is trying to replicate on a significant scale what appear to be the more successful programmes we've supported, so that at some stage these programmes become so successful that the government actually takes them over. Three years from now, we will probably have either the same or a smaller number of different entities that we support. But within them, there will be ones that we replicate on a significant scale, not just in London but around the UK. [A SHINE trustee]

As SHINE funding has evolved, one of the trustees pointed out that there has been a need for 'more people with detailed experience in education to help us implement more efficiently and ambitiously'. Hence in terms of SHINE's governance, an important lesson has been to keep the trustee base small and intimate whilst ensuring a gradual growth in the

number of trustees with specialist knowledge of particular fields – education, marketing, fundraising – useful for SHINE’s grant-making.

Another trustee mentioned that SHINE’s growth and move towards replicating successful projects has led and will lead to an increasing need for more staff and researchers/experts to produce evidence-based models and guidance for SHINE’s future grant-making.

He referred to this research and to a part-time expert who has been employed by SHINE to produce a template for SHINE’s replication strategy. Both have been the products of the increasing need for developing SHINE’s knowledge base.

One of the things we are trying to do is to document as much as we can to provide road maps for ourselves and anyone else interested. Because even if we narrow down to successful projects, we want to know the reasons for success or lack of it. We are going to need more staff to see and carry this process through.

[A SHINE trustee]

What projects should be funded?

One trustee used the analogy of ‘venture capital’ to demonstrate how SHINE’s earlier funding was quite experimental but has since become focused towards projects that have potential for replication.

What we set out to do was to fund a bunch of projects that we thought were good projects and span a pretty wide spectrum, knowing that some of them would work and some of them wouldn’t work. As in a venture capital approach, if we can get four winners out of ten, we would then grow the winners and look at a huge positive return. So we have developed a bias in the second stage of funding to projects that could take and grow into much larger projects.

[A SHINE trustee]

Another trustee pointed out that at the grant proposal stage, judging a project’s success potential is often difficult. He described how the initial success expectations of a project can change or reduce significantly as the project is implemented and concluded, particularly when a project is relatively new. The trustees are aware that not all funded projects can be expected to give high returns nor to be as successful as originally planned. Nevertheless, they do find large differences in expected and actual outcomes frustrating and disappointing, but a learning lesson.

One of the problems with a lot of our projects is that you get big goalpost changes. So what you think you’re funding, very quickly into the game, isn’t what you’re funding.

[A SHINE trustee]

One trustee said that SHINE-funded projects that had clear aims, specific outcomes and planned mechanisms for achieving them, did better than those that did not.

You find that what works is a project that says this is what we’re trying to achieve, here are the expected educational impacts and objectives, and here is how we’re going to make it work. Here is the fun element that is going to interest the kids. So

projects with limited aims, with clearly articulated procedures and methodologies seem to give most promising results. [A SHINE trustee]

One SHINE member of staff thought it was regretful that SHINE no longer wishes to fund mentoring schemes simply because the mentoring project previously funded by SHINE could not produce evidence of measurable attainment improvement.

We've gone off mentoring which I think is a shame. We went off it because we couldn't prove that it raised academic achievement and we couldn't prove it raised academic achievement because we didn't get the right data. And I think if we'd set it up differently, then perhaps we could have made a difference because I think mentoring does work. So I'd like to have another shot at that in a different way.

[A SHINE staff member]

Another SHINE staff member thought that the funded projects that seem to have done best are those that tied things down at a relatively early stage of the grant life-cycle.

There can be a big drop in expectations and levels of satisfaction between the point of grant application and the process of delivery of the project.

[A SHINE staff member]

When asked about how far funding innovative projects is an integral or important part of SHINE grant-making, SHINE trustees painted a mixed picture. One trustee saw the role of SHINE as a private grant-maker in terms of taking risks where public funders would not, and as acting as a trailblazer for future public funding.

Our role is to take risk where the government can't afford to take risk. And we're prepared to take that risk and when we've proved that you can get a lot of return for an innovative project, we're basically demonstrating to the government that it's worth their own investment.

[A SHINE trustee]

Another trustee said 'we don't seek to be innovative or not', but instead 'seek to fund projects that we think will be successful'.

One of the SHINE staff described replication and innovation as equally important funding objectives.

We want to focus down and come up with a number of programmes that we think really work. And then the challenge is to replicate them elsewhere in a way that they can adhere to a basic model. This doesn't mean we've stopped looking for new and innovative ideas. We need to be listening and looking and also still keeping our publicity such that somebody else out there could still let us know about something that we really ought to know about.

[A SHINE staff member]

What grantees should be funded?

When asked about how SHINE selects its grantees and the lessons learned from the current grantees, SHINE staff described some of the pros and cons of funding different grantees.

Newly set up grantees were viewed as ‘slower’ or ‘less able’ or ‘labour intensive’ in implementing the grant. Furthermore, school-based, as opposed to community-based, grantees were thought to be more linked to school structures and hence having easier access to educational outcome data that SHINE’s evaluation strategy requires.

Despite the varieties in the size of its grantees, SHINE has mostly awarded grants to organisations that are reputable and recognised educational charities.

Most of our grantees are recognised organisations, especially our early ones, just because we wanted to be safe and wise and humble in acknowledging that there are people out there doing a lot of good work so let’s use that. [A SHINE staff member]

Two of the SHINE staff and one trustee made a few references to particular grantee organisations as having ‘professional’ or ‘charismatic’ leadership that the interviewees thought made a difference in implementing a project successfully. In another case, a SHINE member of staff, when commenting on a project with a poor success rate, said the project had a ‘*a chaotic management structure who had absolutely no idea of business planning or processes*’.

SHINE’s evaluation requirements

SHINE gives very high priority to evaluation and operates its evaluation strategy in an ‘over-seeing capacity’ through regular personal contact with the grantee organisations throughout the lifetime of a grant. This includes visits, telephone conversations, and e-mail and written correspondence. The timing and regularity of contact is agreed at the initial and subsequent evaluation meetings (SHINE website 2004).

One trustee expressed the importance for evaluating effectiveness which he thought may not be the feeling amongst grantees and funders.

People don’t understand that before we will give money we want to know specifically what they plan to do with it and how they plan to take the donation and turn it into some kind of ‘leverageable’ success. There seems to be not only a lack of accountability but also a sort of – even amongst funders – a lack of awareness as to why you should worry about it. [A SHINE trustee]

When asked how he thought that the SHINE evaluation requirements could be improved, another trustee explained that the requirements needed to be ‘gradually refined’ so to ‘*get down to all the information we need in an as unobtrusive a manner as possible*’. When asked the same question, one of the SHINE staff explained that it was difficult to say whether SHINE’s current evaluation strategy is right, as it is still in a development stage.

What I think we still need to work on, and it’s quite difficult, because it varies from programme to programme, is obtaining meaningful data. But overall, I think the structures are fine. The forms we have developed are evolving and I think we’re asking for reasonable things. [A SHINE staff member]

Another member of the staff argued that SHINE can only strengthen the performance of its grantees if its evaluation requirements are ‘well thought-out’ and that the evaluation data

collected actually proves impact. To improve the evaluation, she continued, it has to be built into a grant awarded. That means *'measuring the achievement in terms of what you're trying to teach the kids, what you're putting in, and what they're getting out of it'*.

6.2 Grantees: Success and impact

Grantee and project staff were asked similar questions to get their views on some of the key elements that contribute to projects and ensure their impact. The sources of data were the grantee questionnaires and the face-to-face interviews with the grantee and project staff.

What projects to fund

A project manager from a grantee organisation receiving SHINE funding, described the use of the volunteer approach of her organisation as a successful method for working with children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

You need to work with the child such that you bring out their inner resources, their talents and strengths that they already have, that are basically being crushed or neglected because of their circumstances, using a volunteer approach and giving that volunteer a lot of support so that they remain on task and with a very specific aim that they're working towards. It's about building the children's self-esteem and minimising their unhelpful behaviour and teaching them to manage that behaviour that's inhibiting them socially, educationally, and psychologically.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Another project manager from a different grantee organisation called for funding more long term projects. This was also a finding that emerged from the grantee questionnaires where a high proportion of the grantees asked for longer grants (see Table 2, Section 4.2). All SHINE staff interviewed also stressed this point, for example:

I wish we were a bit more long-term with children rather than short-term. You can't really change a child's life in a short space of time and I'd really like to see us having a go at taking a few kids and committing to being with them for five years maybe.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Another project manager from a different grantee organisation stressed the importance of projects that have a one-to-one tuition element, because this allows the tutor to listen and pay more attention to the children individually.

There is too much attention in today's classrooms on test results, pupils feel stressed out and get no one-to-one attention. They feel they're not being listened to. Our project has the one-to-one element and the child feels I'm listened to as well talked to... instead of being told what to do.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Several project managers stressed the quality of the project staff and management team as the key factors in ensuring a project's success.

It's a very skilful head teacher and very skilful team who can take what you're being asked to do now and do it but deliver it in a way that still energises and educates. [Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Our project works because it has good quality staff who recognise where the problem is and needs helping, but they also know when to leave the kids alone. And that's about leadership. Leadership only works best when you have complementary gifts in different people. Because you need people who can go in and sense when things are not working and how best to put them right.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

During the interviews, several grantee and project staff stressed the importance of keeping educational support activities focused on curricular subjects.

We've worked alongside the local education authority to make sure that what we were doing supported the curriculum, because there's no point in doing this stuff if it doesn't support the curriculum. [Senior member of a grantee organisation]

Some interviewees also stressed that it is important to include some enrichment activities alongside the curricular-focused activities. This was because most of the SHINE target users are not engaging with the mainstream curriculum and need extra motivation in order to be re-engaged. For example:

The funding has allowed us to build in quite a lot of enrichment activities which I think is incredibly valuable for the sort of deprivation these children have. Many of them don't have the additional experiences that many children take for granted. It's targeting underachievement but through a supplementary programme that focuses on key skills because we want them to measurably get that through their literacy, numeracy, ICT and key skills. And it's also an enrichment to the curriculum model where we're providing a lot of those rich educational experiences that they may not normally get. [Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Most Saturday educational projects tend to be just literacy catch-ups or booster Key Stage three. Whereas this one offers a whole curriculum that complements the school's. There's a lot of mopping up going on in education now, trying to get results up. I wonder what the experience is like for the children who feel the reason they've got to keep going is because they're at level two and got to get to level three. This project is about raising achievement but with the high esteem approach from enjoying learning. [Project manager from a grantee organisation]

SHINE's evaluation requirements

Grantees were asked their views on these, in both the grantee questionnaires and the interviews with the grantee staff.

Table 6 gives the responses from the grantee questionnaire survey completed by the project managers of the grantee organisations. As can be seen in the Table, a very high proportion of grantee respondents (10 out of 12) agreed that the requirements were 'manageable' and two-thirds agreed that the requirements were 'as expected'; notwithstanding these findings,

over half felt that the evaluation requirements were ‘too detailed compared with other funders’.

Table 6. Number of grantees agreeing with statements about SHINE’s evaluation requirements

SHINE’s evaluation requirements are ...	Number of grantees agreeing with statements
Manageable	10
As expected	8
Too detailed compared with other funders	7
Unrealistic	1
N=12	

When asked whether SHINE has been flexible with its evaluation requirements a project manager from a grantee organisation responded positively. She, however, pointed out the numerous challenges that she has faced in coming up with meaningful evaluation data for the kind of children who attend their educational programme.

We’re struggling to find the right format as we are much bigger than SHINE’s other funded projects and have a less stable population. Part of the problem is that there are many tests being done on school pupils and we’re adding another level. The challenge is trying to compare like tests with like and when you have five different tests, what compares with what? Unless you standardise tests, by comparing different tests you’re not really showing any proof of progress or impact.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

A project manager from another grantee organisation explained that SHINE evaluation requirements were quite different from the grantee’s own evaluation strategy and hence needed a lot of detailed work that the grantee was not initially prepared for.

SHINE’s evaluation requirements were much more comprehensive and needed more detailed information than what we already had. Their focus was educational attainment whereas ours is more on behaviour and self-esteem. So there was a lot of communication back and forth to clarify what exactly they wanted.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Several grantee staff expressed their wish for the SHINE trustees to visit the funded projects more to see for themselves that the projects are working.

Please ask them to come down, understand and be with us for a while and see how we work. They will see much more than what the numbers we give them can show.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Another project manager mentioned that the children attending the project had improved their reading, although quantifying by exactly how much would be impossible as there are many other potential factors that can impact on their reading too.

If a child is given attention, care, friendship and time, that will increase that child's chance of fulfilling his/her potential. And I've seen that with our project. Quantifying it is impossible because the project is only half an hour a week and a teacher is putting in 35 hours a week. And the parents are putting in time each week and the child's performance can vary day-to-day and hour-to-hour. We never will learn in a straight line. [Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Another project manager explained that she prefers pupils' evaluations of their own performance, since they know best what difference the SHINE project makes to them.

The children are best able to say why they come, how it makes them feel, what they've learned, what they've enjoyed. They're very articulate. Being able to show the difference on paper is difficult but I know it makes a difference. You can ask them and see what a difference it has made.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

6.3 Parents: Success and impact

Parents were asked in the questionnaire survey about the strengths and weaknesses of the projects their children attended. The parents who responded represented 11 (out of the possible 19) of the SHINE-funded projects. Their responses will be discussed in addition to any relevant comments from the face-to-face interviews held with parents whose children attended 8 of the SHINE-funded projects. Their comments and responses were too many to be presented in a project-by-project format. Instead, some of the recurring themes across the responses/comments will be discussed. The common themes were: project content; project staff and resources; project environment; project users; project evaluation; project management and administration; and project sustainability.

Project content

The most common positive elements mentioned by the parents about the projects' content were:

- ◆ *'availability of one-to-one teaching'* – not available under normal school hours;
- ◆ *'small teaching sessions'* – again unlike normal school hours;
- ◆ *'teaching that is fun but also focused on academic topics and/or subjects'*;
- ◆ *'regularity of sessions'* – gives children a sense of structure.

Parents were divided on the issue of whether too much focus on curricular topics is useful for the children or not. For example, parents of some of the children attending a curricular subject-focused project thought it was useful and important for the project to be structured around the National Curriculum. Because this *'makes them feel more confident in school topics as better understanding is gained through the project'*. However, other parents preferred the same project to be less curricular-based and complained that the project is *'only focusing on SATs rather than being more broad-based'*. The most common complaint on the issue of project content was *'lack of involvement of the parents in the project'*.

Project staff and resources

Many parents referred to ‘supportive’ and ‘understanding’ staff who are good at engaging children and are enthusiastic about teaching them. They described this element as one of the most important strengths of the projects attended by their children. As one parent said, *‘the teachers here are on a much better level with the children than their weekday school teachers’*.

Project environment

The most recurring positive element mentioned about the project environment was its *‘good environment’* that allows the children *‘to meet other children and share experiences’*. Furthermore, some parents referred to the *‘friendly environment’* of the projects that differ from the *‘formal boring school hours’*. One parent mentioned a negative element – *‘competitiveness among the pupils’*.

Project users

Most parents of the children who attended mixed-age or mixed-ability project classes said mixing the age and ability groups was a very good idea. They thought this mixing was much better than streaming and separating according to ability which, as one parent stated, makes the children who are slow learners become even worse. Another parent said that having older and younger children in the same class encourages the younger ones especially. However, a few parents preferred their children to attend project classes with *‘equal or better ability children’*.

Project evaluation

Some parents expressed concerns that there was *‘not enough testing on the topics learned’*. Tests were felt to be important for evaluating what the children actually learned when attending the projects. On the other hand, other parents saw too much testing in the projects as disheartening and stressful for the children.

Project management and administration

One of the most common complaints across the parents was around the project administration. Some thought the project *‘lacked administrative organisation’*. Others mentioned how some teaching sessions would be cancelled without prior notice. Another common complaint was the *‘shortness of the sessions’* that do not leave *‘enough time to cover topics in depth’*.

Project sustainability

Another common complaint across the parents was the issue of project sustainability - the children enjoyed and learned a lot, but what about when the project ends? Many parents mentioned the lack of continuation of a project into the secondary school as a major weakness.

They have a tendency for thinking short-term. I wish they could do this all the way through the secondary school too. [Parent of a participating pupil]

Another parent referred to '*insecurity of future funding*' as another weak point of the project attended by her child.

7. EDUCATIONAL IMPACTS OF SHINE GRANTS

This section examines the educational impacts of the SHINE-funded projects on the participating children from the perspectives of SHINE staff, the grantees, the parents and the children themselves. Data sources are the parent questionnaire (64 respondents), the grantee questionnaire (11 respondents⁹), and the face-to-face interviews.

The types and levels of reported educational impacts varied according to which stakeholder group was reporting them and these variations will be discussed in the sub-sections below. However, all stakeholder groups referred to some form of educational impact – either ‘specifically educational’ (such as improving a child’s achievement rates) or ‘broadly educational’ (such as improving a child’s learning).

In addition, one of the SHINE-funded projects was selected and its evaluation data, available in SHINE’s grant files, were used as a case study to demonstrate the difficulties with trying to measure educational impact accurately. These difficulties will be discussed in Section 7.4.

7.1 Educational impacts: grantee and project staff views

Grantee respondents were asked in the survey to rate the impact of the SHINE-funded projects on a number of educational outcomes of the participating children, and a ‘basket of indicators’ was produced (see also West et al. 2000). The responses of the 11 grantees are shown in Table 7.

As shown in Table 7 and in relation to SHINE funding objectives - to raise achievement levels – overall a very high proportion of grantee respondents said that the SHINE-funded projects were having an impact on the attainment levels of the participating children. The highest educational attainment impacts were reported for ‘improved national exam grades’ and ‘improved SATs scores’, each mentioned by over three-quarters of the respondents (nine out of 11).

As far as general educational outcomes of the participating children are concerned, over three-quarters of the grantee respondents said the SHINE-funded projects had ‘improved access to educational facilities’; almost two-thirds said the projects had ‘improved school attendance’; more than one-third said the projects had ‘improved parental involvement in the child’s learning’ and ‘created a better chance of re-integration into school after an exclusion’; and more than a quarter said the projects had ‘improved access to higher education/further education’, ‘improved access to cultural activities’ and ‘reduced fixed-term exclusions’.

⁹ The total number of the grantee respondents is less than 12 as one grantee organisation had received a one-off capital grant from SHINE and, hence, viewed their SHINE funding as not relevant for educational impact analysis.

Table 7. Grantee respondents rating the educational impacts of SHINE funding on the children as ‘high/very high’

Impact category	Number of grantees rating impacts as ‘high’ or ‘very high’
Better access to educational facilities	9
Improved attitudes towards school	9
Improved grades in national exams (public examinations)	9
Improved SATs (national test) scores	9
Improved teacher reports	7
Improved school attendance	7
Better chance of re-integration into school	4
Improved parental involvement	4
Better access to FE/HE	3
Better access to cultural activities	3
Reduced fixed-term exclusions	3

N=11

N is less than 12 because one grantee respondent did not answer this question as the grantee’s SHINE-funded project was a one-off capital funding and, hence, viewed as not relevant for educational impact analysis.

Educational attainment impacts of the SHINE grants were also described by the grantee interviewees. For example, a project manager from a grantee organisation explained that the majority of the children attending their SHINE-funded project have improved their reading levels. She, however, said that for the very slow readers, it has been much harder to show improvements on paper, as many standardised tests, like curriculum levels, cannot capture the improvements of children with learning difficulties.

The biggest challenge is being able to say this child has come from here to here and the SHINE project has made this difference. For some of them we can show the difference in hard evidence. For example for year six pupils, we were certainly able to say this is what we predicted, this is what they got, and these ones have made a difference. The challenge is the reading levels of the extremely slow readers, how to show they’ve made progress even if it’s not showing on paper.

[Project manager from a grantee organisation]

The grantee interviewees, in addition, described some of the general educational impacts of the SHINE grants. According to a senior member of a grantee organisation, there is indication that their SHINE-funded project has positively impacted the school-level attendance.

You need to do a heavy serious research to prove impact on schools, but the indicative signs are that attendance has improved, certainly self-esteem has improved amongst the kids. In the early days, I used to say to the schools, is this stuff making a difference? And their response was quite simple, this stuff takes effort for a school to accommodate this, if it didn’t make a difference, we wouldn’t do it.

[Senior member of a grantee organisation]

According to two project managers from different grantee organisations, there have also been general educational impacts on some parents.

For some parents coming out on visits and days out is fantastic. It's a huge learning experience for them, too. They've been thrilled by it all.

[Project manager of a grantee organisation]

Made parents realise that their children have potentials and encouraged them to hold better views of the schools in the borough.

[Project manager of a grantee organisation]

7.2 Educational impacts: parents' and children's views

In this section, educational impacts of the SHINE-funded projects will be examined from the perspectives of the parents and the children. The data sources were the parents' questionnaire (64 respondents) and the face-to-face interviews with the parents and the children.

When the parents were asked in the survey to rate how much their children's educational outcomes had changed since attending the SHINE project, their responses varied and are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Percentage of parents rating the educational impacts of the SHINE-funded projects on their children

Impact Category	Percentage of parents rating impact as 'much better' or 'better'	N
Parental involvement	85	39
Educational achievement	76	58
Attitude towards school	72	50
School attendance	57	46

N is less than 64 as some questions were not answered by all respondents or were not viewed as relevant to their children.

When asked whether the parent's involvement in the child's learning had changed since the child attended the SHINE project, 39 (out of the possible 64) parents viewed this question as relevant to their child. Out of the 39 parents, 85% said their involvement in their child's learning had become 'much better/better' since the SHINE project, and 8% said it had not changed.¹⁰

When asked about how much the child's educational achievement had changed since attending the SHINE project, 58 parents (out of the possible 64) viewed this question as relevant to their children. Out of the 58 parents, 76% said their child's educational

¹⁰ The percentage does not add up to 100 as some respondents said they were not sure about the answer.

achievement had become ‘much better/better’ since attending the SHINE-funded projects. 12% said their child’s educational achievement had not changed.¹¹

When asked about how much their child’s attitude towards school had changed since attending the SHINE project, 50 (out of the possible 64) parents viewed this question as relevant to their child. Out of the 50 parents, 72% thought their child’s attitude towards school had become ‘much better/better’, and 26% thought it had not changed.

When asked about how much their child’s school attendance had improved since attending the SHINE project, 46 (out of the possible 64) parents viewed this question as relevant to their child. Out of the 46 parents, 57% thought the child’s attendance had become ‘much better/better’, and 39% thought it had not changed.

Parents were also asked in the interviews about the educational impacts of the SHINE-funded projects on their children. Some of the impact examples given by them are quoted in Figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5. Examples of subject-focused/skill-focused educational impacts on the children as reported by parents

Literacy impacts

Her writing is smaller and clearer.

My daughter is better in reading now. She’s become a very confident reader since she’s been reading aloud to someone. She used to prefer reading in her head.

Science impacts

His understanding of science topics has become so much better by exposing him to advanced subjects of science.

My son has a clear understanding of each topic. He will get good results in Science compared to Maths and English, thanks to the SHINE-funded project. He is doing the Science subject much better than other subjects. The classes gave my son full confidence in science studies by knowing the subject more clearly. Each topic was learned in more detail and with clear understanding. My son was eager to attend the classes and prefers to continue.

Although my child has enjoyed them [the classes], I do not think they have caused changes in any way apart from gaining a better understanding of the subject.

Mixed-subject impacts

My child gets to learn more interesting new things and covers new topics every week, but I think not enough time is spent on new topics when every week the children cover a different topic.

It made things better for my son. When he didn’t understand at class time, he would become clearer after he met his tutor.

¹¹ Ibid.

Figure 6. Examples of general educational impacts on the children as reported by the parents

Allowed her to continue at school without permanent exclusion until a long-term school placement was found for her.

His overall attitude towards learning has dramatically improved.

There has been no change in my child's education. They tend not to help in the child's weak areas. I expected my child to develop in areas of concern but this has proved futile even after speaking with the tutors.

It has helped her negotiate with the teaching staff and the individual tutors.

The programme has advanced her steps towards a future career by teaching and giving her experience in TV and film production. She's developed people handling skills in the role of assistant trainer. It has provided wonderful opportunities to learn about the media industry.

The children were asked during the interviews about any positive educational impacts of the SHINE-funded projects that they attended. A few examples of their comments are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Some examples of educational impacts given by the children

Child 1: If you fancy teaching maths in future, this will help you decide. Let's say if you want to be a teacher, you know if you do this.

Child 2: This project is not serious for me because I only do it once a week. I'd take it more serious if the prize was better, if it [the prize] was new, if it wasn't second hand.

Child 3: I don't stay away from school now that I'm doing this project.

Child 4: It makes my homework easier to understand. You don't learn new things, but you learn new explanations.

Child 5: I enjoy teaching [my peers] because when I teach them, I understand my own homework better.

You do your reading very easily here, they help you a lot. I prefer it to my real school because you learn quite a bit. Well, I'd rather play with my friends on Saturdays, but I need to learn and get better at English, because I'm still not good at it. But my teacher here is nice and she's really helping me.

I went there [SHINE project] and they said they're setting up a website and it's a website of all these different children, and then she [the project tutor] asked me to put mine in there and then what you do, you click on your picture and then you just write stuff about what you've been doing and you can put pictures on there too.

My favourite subject is maths, so I come here to make my maths even better.

I think every school should have it [the SHINE-funded project], because it's really helped me with my school work. I couldn't remember my geography. Now I know a lot.

I like the history bit. Because it tells you what people did many years ago. I remember things better now. I like the way the teachers make you act what you've learned. You practice and learn.

7.3 Educational impacts: SHINE staff views

When asked whether there have been improvements in attainments of a significant number of the children across the SHINE grants, one of the SHINE staff responded definitely and positively.

Well, across all of them I do think there's been a rise in their knowledge and learning and in lots of cases there's been a proven raise in their attainment. For example, a couple of the projects have definitely resulted in children's reading or spelling improving. We're reasonably comfortable in saying that we don't think it would have happened without the SHINE-funded projects.

[A SHINE staff member]

When asked the same question, another SHINE staff member again responded positively – that there have been improvements in attainments of the children. She, however, pointed out the impact of attendance rate on the attainments.

There's definitely been improvements in their attainments, wherever children are attending consistently and frequently, but not necessarily where they're not. I think, where they've come on a very ad hoc basis, literally maybe only once or twice, I'm not really sure what the impact has been for them.

[A SHINE staff member]

Another SHINE staff member also agreed that there had been improvements in children's attainments, in some cases significant changes. However, the respondent mentioned that there were also cases where the attainments did not improve at all.

We still have loads to learn and a lot more could be done with the SHINE money. Where we need to learn is in the things that SHINE funds but have not improved the children's achievements. But in a lot of things SHINE funds, children's achievements have improved, in some cases dramatically. So SHINE has overall done what it set out to do, but it's about how do we make sure that more of what we fund is not in the bit that doesn't make a lot of difference.

[A SHINE staff member]

One SHINE staff member mentioned the educational learning opportunities that one of the projects had provided for the parents as it encourages parents to become more involved in the learning of their children.

The grantee has given us meaningful data for the levels of parental involvement. They've shown that these parents who never attended anything, now attend the parents' meeting, they speak to the teacher in the playground, they come along and attend some classes available for the parents while the children are in the class.

[A SHINE staff member]

Another SHINE staff member, when asked what the overall impacts were across the SHINE projects, explained that, at the very least, there has been no harm done across the board. She explained that all the projects have at least provided enjoyable learning and general educational opportunities for the children.

A common thread across all of them is that they have provided children with quite exciting, interesting, and enjoyable things to do. I don't think any of the projects have done any harm and they've all provided the children with something that we would term broadly educational that they wouldn't have had otherwise.

[A SHINE staff member]

7.4 Measuring educational impact: a grant case study

One of SHINE's funded projects was selected and its evaluation data, available in SHINE's grant files, were used as a case study to demonstrate the difficulties with trying to measure educational impact accurately.

The grant/project case study, which will be referred to as Project X, was chosen for having one of the most manageable evaluation data sets amongst SHINE grants. It is an intensive one-to-one literacy support programme for primary school children in, mainly, two of the Greater London boroughs. It is one of SHINE's earliest grants and has been successful in getting another three years of funding from SHINE.

Project X's first phase of SHINE funding was for three years and lasted until Summer 2003. The funding was mainly used for delivering a literacy programme in three primary schools – which in this report will be referred to as School A, B, and C respectively – over three years, beginning in the academic year 2000/01.

The majority of the primary school children participating in Project X were seriously behind in literacy and any progress they made constituted considerable success. The majority were over 2 years behind with their reading when they started the project.

The evaluation data of Project X consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data included a nationally standardised test – WRAT or Wider Range Achievement Test – used for measuring improvements in the reading age (RA) and spelling age (SA) of the participating children. RA and SA of the children were measured when they joined the programme and annually thereafter. Project X also provided percentiles by indicating the 'relative' improvements in RA and SA. This can be particularly useful for average achievers who may not show improvements in absolute terms. Additionally Project X provided SATs (national Key Stage test results) when available. The qualitative data provided consists of the project and the school teaching staff commenting on and predicting progress.

Educational impact on the children attending Project X

In order to assess the educational impact of Project X on the participating children, the average and the range (lowest to highest) of improvements in reading age and spelling age will be discussed and presented visually for each of the three Schools, across the three years of SHINE funding for this project. The data sets are presented in the Tables and Figures that follow.

Table 9. Reading age and spelling age improvement data for the children across the three schools for the year 2000/01

Data categories	School A	School B	School C
Average and range of improvement in RA (months)	Average: +6 Range: (-27 to +30)	Average: +11.4 Range: (+1 to +19)	Average: +9.9 Range: (+3 to +18)
Average and range of improvement in SA (months)	Average: +6.6 Range: (0 to +30)	Average: +7 Range: (0 to +15)	Average: +11.8 Range: (-6 to +16)
No. of children improving their RA	8	11	20
No. of children improving their SA	7	10	18
Total N=41	N=10	N=11	N=20

As shown in Table 9, for the funding year 2000/01, overall a high proportion of the children in each school improved their reading and spelling age. The highest average improvement in reading age was in School B – the 11 children participating improved by an average of 11.4 months, with the highest improvement by 19 months and the lowest by 1 month. The highest average improvement in spelling age was in School C – the 20 children improved by an average of 9.9 months, with the highest improvement by 16 months and the lowest was a regression by 6 months (see Figure 8 for a visual presentation).

Figure 8. Average improvements in reading age and spelling age for the children across the three schools for the year 2000/01

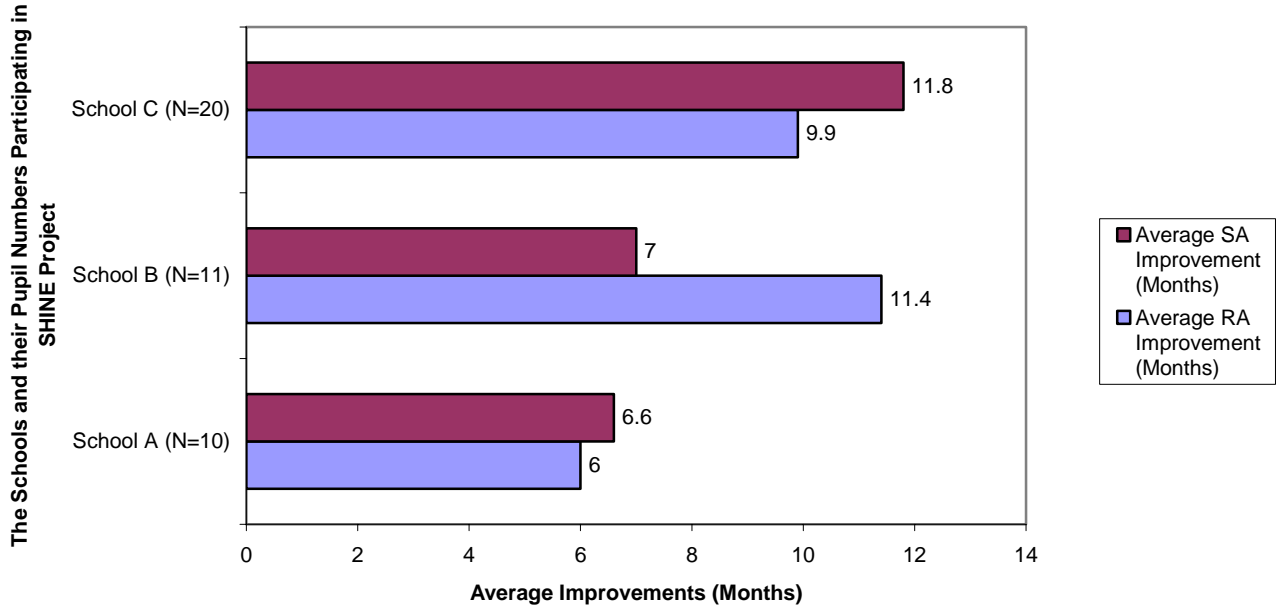


Table 10 shows the improvements in spelling age and reading age across the three schools for the year 2001/02. As shown in the Table, overall a high proportion of the children in each school improved their reading and spelling age. The highest average improvement in reading age was in School B – the 12 children participating improved by an average of 15.7 months, with the highest improvement by 42 months and the lowest by 2 months. The highest average improvement in spelling age was in School C – the 23 children improved by an average of 14.8 months, with the highest improvement by 47 months and the lowest by 0 months (see Figure 9 for a visual presentation).

Table 10. Reading age and spelling age improvement data for the children across the three schools for the year 2001/02

Data categories	School A	School B	School C
Average and range of improvement in RA (months)	Average: +8.1 Range: (0 to +22)	Average: +15.7 Range: (+2 to +42)	Average: +11.7 Range: (+1 to +42)
Average and range of improvement in SA (months)	Average: +6 Range: (0 to +26)	Average: +12.5 Range: (-2 to +34)	Average: +14.8 Range: (0 to +47)
No. of children improving their RA	6	12	23
No. of children improving their SA	7	10	22
Total N= 43	N=8	N=12	N=23

Figure 9. Average improvements in reading age and spelling age for the children across the three schools for the year 2001/02

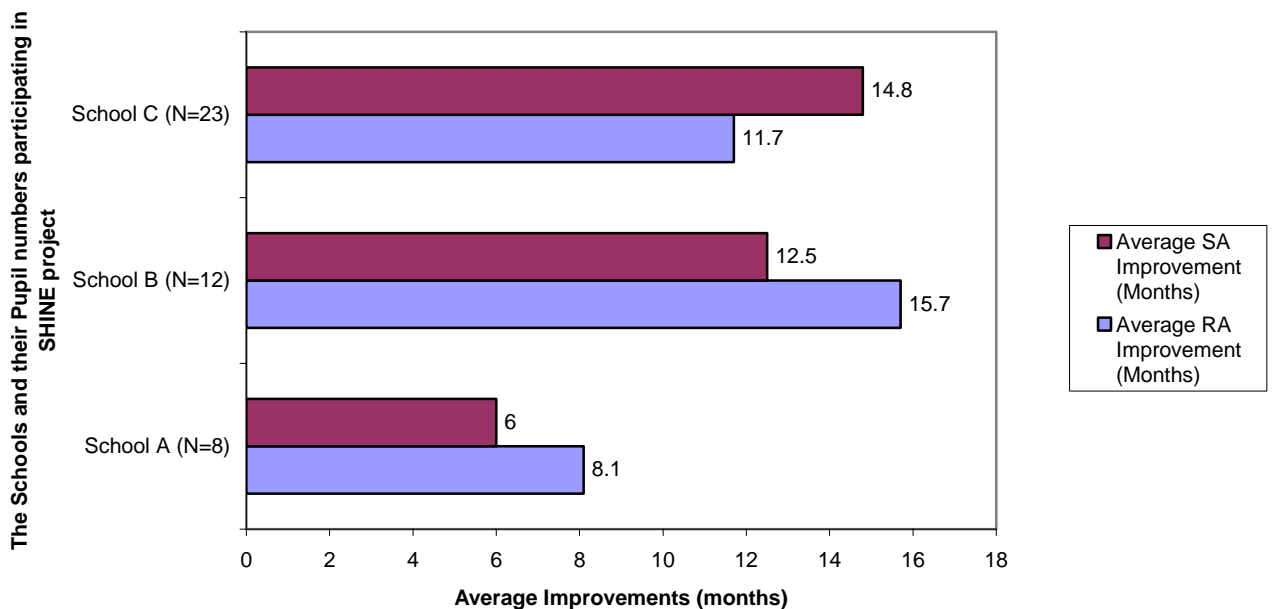
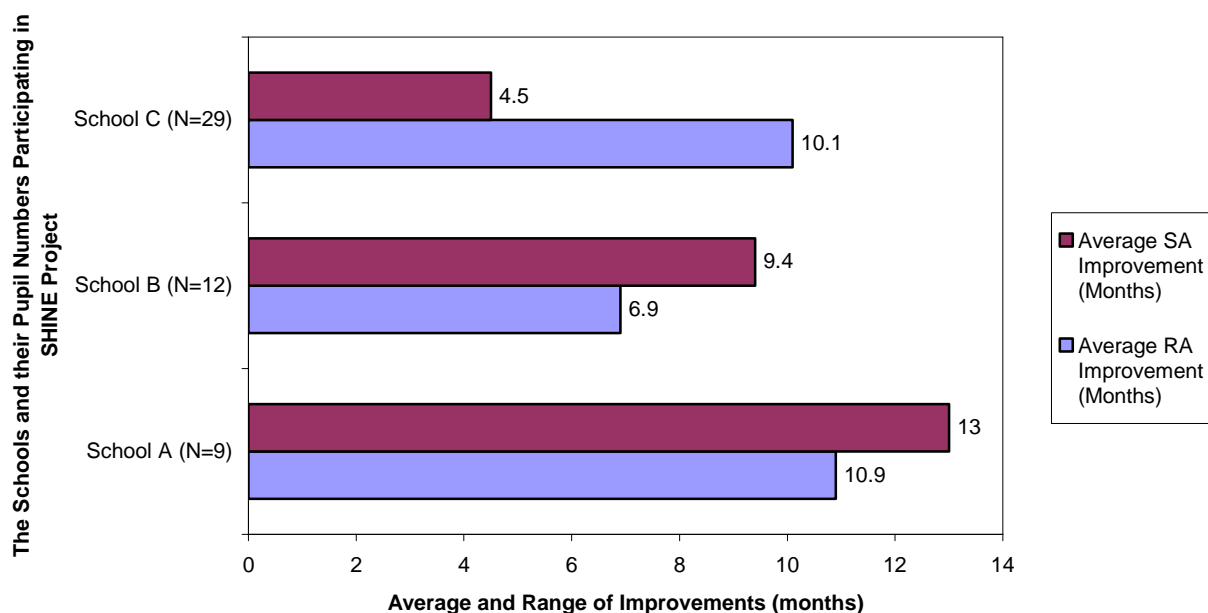


Table 11 shows the improvements in spelling age and reading age across the three schools for the year 2002/03. As shown in the Table, overall a high proportion of the children in each school improved their reading and spelling age. The highest average improvement in reading age was in School A – the 9 children participating improved by an average of 10.9 months, with the highest improvement by 32 months and the lowest by 0 months. The highest average improvement in spelling age was in School A – the 9 children improved by an average of 13 months, with the highest improvement by 30 months and the lowest by 2 months (see Figure 10 for a visual presentation).

Table 11. Reading age and spelling age improvement data for the children across the three schools for the year 2002/03

Data categories	School A	School B	School C
Average and range of improvement in RA (months)	Average: +10.9 Range: (0 to +32)	Average: +6.9 Range: (-8 to +18)	Average: +10.1 Range: (-2 to +29)
Average and range of improvement in SA (months)	Average: +13 Range: (+2 to +30)	Average: +9.4 Range: (-9 to +32)	Average: +4.5 Range: (-6 to +25)
No. of children improving their RA	8	9	26
No. of children improving their SA	9	10	22
Total N= 50	N=9	N=12	N=29

Figure 10. Average improvements in reading age and spelling age for the children across the three schools for the year 2002/03



Meaningfulness of the educational impact measured

The SHINE evaluation data sets for Project X, shown in the Tables and the Figures above, suggest that overall the SHINE-funded Project X has improved the reading and spelling age of the children across the three schools. This is evident from the high proportion of the children improving in each school. Although this is not a completely accurate measure of improvement, it is clearly in the predicted direction.

It is noteworthy that there was variation between the three schools in terms of the range of improvements in reading age and spelling age and in terms of the proportion of children improving. This could be attributed to different children with various learning needs having been selected in different schools, differing starting points, differing socio-economic contexts and differing levels of school effectiveness.

It is also noteworthy that for two of the schools – School B and School C - there seems to be a decrease in both the average spelling age and the average reading age improvements (months) from the second year to the third year of the project's funding. This could, however, be a result of the children's differing characteristics year on year. For School A, on the other hand, there was a rise in both the average reading age and spelling age improvements (months) from the second to the third year of the project's funding. It must, however, be stated that despite the decrease for the Schools B and C, still a large proportion of the children from both schools improved their reading and spelling age in the last year of the project funding.

A number of other issues need to be considered when attributing impact to SHINE funding and, also, if the educational impact measurement is to be made more rigorous.

- ◆ The number of SHINE children for each school and across the three years of funding is small, making it harder to detect significant changes than if the numbers were larger.
- ◆ Different children with varied and special learning needs attended the projects across the schools and across the three years of funding, making comparison – across the years, the schools, and the children - more difficult. However, by using averages of improvement, comparison across the children can become less difficult though still problematic.
- ◆ SHINE children go to different schools and their educational achievement will be affected by other factors that are difficult to segregate and making it problematic to say with certainty how much relative impact SHINE funding had on the children.
- ◆ The standardised test used for measuring the children's literacy uses single word assessments, and hence measures only a few aspects of literacy and may not capture improvements in other aspects of the children's literacy.
- ◆ If educational impact is to be measured more meaningfully, a cohort study is needed that follows the achievements of a cohort of long-term project attendees, as they move from one year to the next and compares it with a comparison group. For Project X, however, such a cohort study is not possible or feasible for several main reasons.

Firstly, the attendees are a moving population and, hence, very few are long-term attendees. Secondly, for a cohort study to be meaningful, a fairly large sample is needed. Project X funded by SHINE had only about 50 children. Thirdly, the type of children who attend Project X have severe and very specific learning needs/difficulties, making comparison across a fairly large cohort less meaningful as achievement rates for the Project X children are very individual-based.

- ◆ Since Project X's achievement data are at an individual level, there is no external comparison group that could give a sense of how well the children are doing compared with their peers. This is inevitable as most of the children attending the project are SEN children, for whom there is no standardised national achievement average. Their achievements cannot be compared with, for example, the national averages in terms of Key Stage levels. Project X, however, does provide qualitative school teacher predictions that tend to provide, to a certain degree, comparative notes on how a child is doing compared to his/her peers.
- ◆ Project attendance rate and/or length of stay in Project X may also influence the educational achievement of the participating children. However, there were difficulties in carrying out a statistical correlation study between attendance and achievement: attendance rate for each individual child was provided for only the last year of the SHINE funding; and even for that year individual attendance rates were provided for about only 40 of the SHINE children.

8. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF SHINE GRANTS

This section examines the personal and social impacts of the SHINE-funded projects on the participating children from the perspectives of the grantee/project staff and the parents of the children. Data sources are the parent questionnaire (64 respondents), the grantee questionnaire (11 respondents¹²), and the face-to-face interviews.

The types and levels of personal and social impacts reported varied according to which stakeholder group was reporting them and these variations will be discussed in the sub-sections below. However, all stakeholder groups referred to some form of personal and social impact across the SHINE-funded projects.

8.1 Personal and social impacts: grantee and project staff views

Grantee respondents were asked in the survey to rate the impact of the SHINE funded projects on the personal and social outcomes of the participating pupils. Their responses are shown in Table 12. Overall, all 11 grantee respondents reported some form of personal and/or social impacts on the participating children.

The highest impact was reported for ‘improved self-confidence’, where all grantees said that the SHINE project had a very high or high positive impact on the children’s confidence. Almost all respondents (10 out of 11) reported a very high or high positive impact on the children’s relationship with adults, their communication skills, and also their motivation. Over three-quarters (9 out of 11) of the respondents said that SHINE projects had a very high or high positive impact on the children’s relationship with their peers, and also on their aspirations.

Table 12. Grantee respondents rating the personal/social impacts of SHINE funding on the children as ‘very high/high’

Impact category	Number of grantees rating impact on children as ‘very high’ or ‘high’
Increased self-confidence	11
Improved communication skills	10
Better relationship with adults	10
Increased motivation	10
Better relationship with peers	9
Improved aspirations	9
Improved life skills	8
N=11	

Personal impact categories, particularly increased self-confidence, were also emphasised by grantee and project staff interviewees.

¹² The total number of the grantee respondents is less than 12 as one grantee organisation had received a one-off capital grant from SHINE and, hence, viewed their SHINE funding as not relevant for educational impact analysis.

Self-confidence is important because if a child hasn't got any confidence to have a go at saying a word, then they'll just not say anything and that is part of the learning curve. [Project Manager from a grantee organisation]

Quite a few of the grantee staff interviewed mentioned improvement in the personal behaviour of the children and how this can indirectly and in the long-run contribute to improvements in the academic achievement of the children.

Self-esteem is another outcome of the project. We've been very successful with a number of the older disaffected boys. As a result of the SHINE project, their behaviour in school improved because they didn't want to lose their place in the project. How you demonstrate those knock-on effects back into the classroom is very difficult but I did try some quantitative assessment with the teachers and asked, have you noticed any distinct improvements in self-esteem, behaviour, motivation, co-operation. A lot of the children had made a lot of progress and the teachers were saying that, for example, some of them are being more positive in their attitude to learning, and how this had come from their commitment to the SHINE project. [A project manager from a grantee organisation]

Another project manager argued for improvements in personal and emotional behaviour of children as being valuable in their own right, even if not accompanied in the short-term by improved attainment.

Their academic achievement may partly improve. But the improvement in their behaviour has been worth working on. Because it achieves an awful lot, anecdotally as well as from the school feedback we get. The schools are all much happier with the children. Their academic work may not be substantially better for the moment, but the improvement in their behaviour is very valuable in its own right, as well as being valuable for making sure they behave well in the class and hence listen better and pay attention more. [Project manager from a grantee organisation]

Another project mentioned that social bonds have been created between pupils who attend the SHINE-funded project and the bonds have extended beyond the project and into to the mainstream school hours.

It's a great idea to mix year four, five and six, because the lower ability year sixes actually put their hands up to show the younger years that they can actually do something. I've seen friendships grow between different years. I've seen them even during the week, during school hours, playing together and looking out for each other. [Project manager from a grantee organisation]

8.2 Personal and social impacts: Parents views

In this section, personal and social impacts of SHINE-funded projects on the participating children will be examined from the perspective of the parents. The data sources were the parents' questionnaire (64 respondents) and the face-to-face interviews with the parents (13 interviewees).

When the parents were asked in the survey to rate how much their children’s personal or social outcomes had changed since attending the SHINE projects, their responses varied and are shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Percentage of parents rating personal/social impacts of the SHINE-funded projects on their children

Impact category	Percentage of parents rating impact as ‘much better/better’	N
Communication levels	83	55
Self-confidence	81	58
Social relations	67	55
Personal behaviour	58	52

N is less than 64 as some questions were not answered by all respondents or were not viewed by all as relevant to their children.

As shown in Table 13, the most highly rated personal/social impacts on the children were ‘communication levels’ – with 83% of the parents saying the SHINE project had made their child’s communication levels ‘much better/better’ - and ‘self-confidence’ – with 81% of the parents saying the project had made their child’s self-confidence ‘much better/better’. Two-thirds (67%) of the parents said the SHINE project had made their child’s social relations ‘much better/better’, and over half (58%) of the parents said the SHINE project had made their child’s personal behaviour ‘much better/better’.

When parents were asked in the interviews about the positive personal and social impacts of the SHINE-funded projects on their children, some of the impact examples mentioned by them are grouped and quoted below.

Personal impacts

One parent was very positive about the mixture of the personal, educational, and social impacts that her son’s one-to-one tutor had made in her son’s life.

My son’s tutor made him feel more grown up and to behave well at times. He helped my son with his reading, his homework and I think my son would say with his football. My son was very happy to see his tutor. His tutor never missed coming to help my son and my son’s friend. Help was there when these boys needed a male figure in their lives.

Two of the parents interviewed mentioned how the SHINE projects had made their children happier in school as a result of the personal impacts made by the projects.

He is much happier at school and as a result of renewed confidence has been voted in as a school councillor.

She’s better all round. More concentration, less tantrums, more settled, and she’s happier at school.

One of the children interviewed, mentioned how the enrichment activities of the SHINE project he attended had improved his behaviour at school and towards his parent.

The project is fun. It helps you in your behaviour and it really and truly helps you to improve your behaviour at school. It will help you, if you're like really rude like when your mum asks you to do something and you don't want to do it, it helps you to understand that you're doing it wrong and you should most of the time help your mum.

Social impacts

Three parents mentioned how the projects their children attended helped their children's social relationships, particularly with adults – including the school teachers and the parents themselves.

It has improved my relationship with my daughter and also has improved her and my social skills.

It has helped her negotiate with teaching staff and individual tutors.

It has made things better because my child has become a more confident person and can interact with other people without feeling too shy.

9. IMPACTS OF SHINE GRANTS ON GRANTEE ORGANISATIONS

This section examines the impacts of SHINE grants on the grantee organisations from the perspectives of grantee staff and SHINE staff. Data sources are the grantee questionnaire (11 respondents¹³) and the face-to-face interviews.

The types and levels of organisational impacts reported varied across the two stakeholder groups – the funder and the grantee. However, both stakeholder groups referred to some form of organisational impact across the SHINE grants.

9.1 Impacts: Grantee staff views

Grantee respondents were asked in the survey to rate the impact of the SHINE grant on their own organisation. Their responses are shown in Table 14.

The highest impacts of SHINE grants reported were: ‘increased credibility for the grantee organisation’ (reported by almost two-thirds of the grantee respondents); ‘increased funding leverage’ (reported by over two-thirds of the respondents); and ‘changed organisation’s aims’ (reported by two-thirds of the respondents).

Almost half of the grantees thought the SHINE grants had ‘very high/high’ impact on their organisations by having created more admin duties, and by having created new local links.

Table 14. Number of grantees rating the impact of SHINE funding on their own organisations

Impact category	Number of grantees rating impact as ‘high’ or ‘very high’	N
Helped leverage funding	7	10
Increased organisational credibility	7	11
Changed organisational aims	6	9
Created more admin duties	5	11
Created new local links	5	11
Created managerial posts	2	9
Created administrative posts	1	9
Created new national links	1	10
Increased organisational costs	1	11
Increased tension with local organisations	0	10

N is less than 12 as one respondent viewed this question as not relevant to their capital grant received from SHINE, and some respondents did not view some impact categories as relevant to their organisation.

¹³ The total number of the grantee respondents is less than 12 as one grantee organisation had received a one-off capital grant from SHINE and, hence, viewed their SHINE funding as not relevant for educational impact analysis.

Impacts mentioned by the grantee interviewees chimed with the grantee questionnaire responses. When asked about the impact of SHINE funding on the grantee as an organisation, several grantee interviewees mentioned the funding leverage that the SHINE grant had brought.

One grantee staff member, however, stated that it is difficult to tell whether the other extra funding would have come in anyway, with or without the SHINE grant.

We've attracted further funding from the DfES. Whether we attracted that because of our SHINE funding or the fact that they were attracted by the nature of our project anyway, I'm not sure. [A grantee staff member]

Another grantee interviewee mentioned the networking impact of the SHINE funding.

With SHINE as your funder, other people respect you because SHINE is a specialised educational grant-maker and can increase your networking with other educational service providers. [A grantee staff member]

9.2 Impacts: SHINE staff views

When asked about to what extent and in what ways SHINE has strengthened its grantee organisations, one of the SHINE staff listed a number of organisational impacts.

I think we've strengthened them as an organisation in many cases, assisted with project delivery, made them quite focused on what it was they were trying to achieve, and how they would report on that, even if they found that difficult. And I think they can use us as leverage for additional funding. [A SHINE staff member]

Another SHINE staff member said that SHINE funding had helped the grantees with running projects that would not have happened without the SHINE grant.

They've benefited financially and being able to run things that they wouldn't have been able to otherwise. I do think in some cases we've also helped them with their processes and procedures definitely. [A SHINE staff member]

Another SHINE staff member said that SHINE grants have strengthened the grantees' evaluation capabilities.

We have helped organisations with the monitoring and evaluation in a lot of cases. Whether all of them wanted to be helped is a different story, but in a number of cases people have come back to us saying we're so pleased we've done this now. [A SHINE staff member]

10. DISCUSSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Discussion

Overall, the findings of this research indicate that SHINE grants were making a difference, in some instances a big difference, in securing the outcomes that SHINE's educational programme wants to achieve from its funding – to help under-achieving children do better educationally.

The findings also indicate that success varied across the grants and the projects, according to the stakeholder group – the grant-maker, the grantee, or the beneficiary – describing the success.

Furthermore, interpretations of what makes a successful grant – success mechanisms – also varied according to which stakeholder was describing them.

Types and levels of impact across SHINE grants

Although the impact types varied across grants, they could be divided into four main categories: educational, personal, social, and organisational, with each having several sub-categories.

Across the four impact categories, the most frequent category reported by the grantees was personal impact of the SHINE-funded projects on the children, with 'improvements in self-confidence' as the highest-rated personal impact.

Across the four impact categories, the most frequent categories reported by the parents were both educational and personal impacts of the SHINE-funded projects, with 'improving parental involvement in the child's learning' and 'better communication levels for the child' as the highest-rated impacts, respectively.

The grants have made it possible for the children to attend educational projects that have helped them in a way that can be termed 'broadly educational' – they have learned and increased their knowledge in something. Many children have also improved their more specific educational achievements, like improvements in literacy, some very significantly.

Impact on the grantees as organisations was also reported. The most frequent organisational impact reported was that the SHINE grant had strengthened the grantee by 'increasing the grantee's credibility' or by 'increasing the funding leverage' or by 'changing the organisational aims'.

Interpreting success across grants

The research findings indicate that the interpretations of success varied across the stakeholders – the grant-maker, the grantees, and the beneficiaries.

For most of the SHINE staff and trustees, a successful grant was ultimately one that had produced measurable specific educational outcomes.

For most of the grantees, a successful grant was ultimately one that had helped the children in whatever capacity – educationally, personally or socially.

For most of the parents, a successful grant was ultimately one that had helped with the specific educational, personal, or social needs of their children.

An arts-based project, funded in the initial phase of SHINE’s grant-making, was described by most of the SHINE trustees and staff as not very successful in terms of its results. The same project was, however, highly regarded by several parents for having provided their children with vocational, broadly educational and personal enrichment opportunities, with some parents describing it as ‘having no weaknesses’.

A similar pattern emerged for a mentoring project. Several parents described it as having no weaknesses and very helpful for improving the personal behaviour and social skills of their children. SHINE staff and trustees, on the other hand, viewed this grant as not so successful, in terms of delivering specific educational outcomes. The grantee staff viewed helping the behaviour of a child as ultimately contributing to betterment of educational outcomes.

Another example where differences in success interpretations emerged was in the case of an innovative peer-tutoring educational project. Here, the grantee staff praised the project for having increased the self-confidence of the tutors. The tutors themselves had mixed feelings towards the project. Some thought it was very helpful and broadly educational whilst others found it ‘boring’ and not helpful at all.

One mixed-subject-focused project, which has been replicated by SHINE, received praise from not only the parents, but also from the SHINE staff/trustees and the grantee staff. There were, however, three areas of complaint by the parents: not enough involvement of the parents; not happy that the project was not followed up in secondary schools; and not enough time spent on new topics.

10.2 Policy implications

SHINE should:

- ◆ continue to fund out-of-school-hours educational initiatives as an effective way of raising achievement levels of disadvantaged children;
- ◆ recognise that under-achievement is reported to be highest amongst particular groups of disadvantaged children – children in care, children excluded from mainstream schooling and children with special educational needs; hence funding should be targeted at projects that aim to include and encourage access for these particular groups;
- ◆ continue to take risks and support projects where proven measurable impact may have not been identified in previously funded projects; at times qualitative assessments of the impact of a particular project can be as relevant and important as quantitative assessments;

- ◆ take account of government funding initiatives for supporting under-achieving disadvantaged children and identify funding gaps and try to fill those gaps;
- ◆ bear in mind that for some areas of educational provision – e.g. for children in care or for children excluded from school – returns on investment can be slow and this should not stop the trustees from funding worthwhile projects that have a desperate shortage of funding;
- ◆ review mission fulfilment and progress on funding objectives regularly and seek perspectives from experts and practitioners in the field of education; long-term plans should be flexible enough to allow for re-focusing whilst retaining successful elements of previous grant-making;
- ◆ continue to develop a project sustainability strategy; funded projects should have a chance to carry on once SHINE funding runs out, whether through extension of funding or through guiding the grantees towards other funding sources; even in the case of grants perceived as ‘least successful’, SHINE should develop a supportive exit strategy by pointing grantees in the right direction.

Support and communication with grantees

SHINE should:

- ◆ continue conducting site visits at the application stage as well as during the project life cycle to encourage face-to-face contact and learn more about the grantee organisation and the community it works with; this is very important in the light of the fact that many grantee staff interviewed during this research, asked for more site-visits by SHINE trustees so they may see for themselves how the projects are helping the participating children; site-visits can be critical, for sometimes even the most effective ‘agents of change’ can only explain what they are doing by saying, ‘come and see’;
- ◆ maintain its flexible approach to unforeseen circumstances and changing needs of the grantees and their service users;
- ◆ recognise that some grantees, in particular those working with refugees or children in care, may need more time to work with their beneficiaries to raise achievement levels.

Impact evaluation requirements

- ◆ Ideally to measure impact in terms of hard data, randomised controlled trials need to be carried out; these can enable causal links to be made between predictor variables and dependent variables such as test results. Quasi-experimental designs using experimental and control or comparison groups can also provide statistically meaningful results. It might be possible for a comparison group of children to be identified, whose progress can be compared with that of the children attending a SHINE-funded activity. However, such an approach is costly and the benefits might not outweigh the costs.

- ◆ SHINE should use this research as a step towards the next level of its evaluation strategy; it should review why SHINE evaluates its grants in the first place, what its evaluation requirements are, and how best to process its evaluation requirements flexibly and yet rigorously; it should develop its evaluation strategy in the light of emerging realities and recommendations in the fields of educational provision and research; and it should also maintain a balance between seeking quantitative ‘success numbers’ and qualitative ‘success stories’.
- ◆ SHINE should bear in mind that to evaluate scientifically, projects may end up being narrowly defined and inflexibly applied for a limited experimental period; the effort to evaluate grants too rigorously may lead SHINE away from some highly effective potential grantees.
- ◆ The recent evaluation templates/forms developed by SHINE will be helpful in gathering more consistent information for its future grants; however, the needs and resources of the grantees need to be borne in mind when developing and administering the forms. The templates should be a helpful tool for the grantee organisations too, enabling them to learn what impacts their projects are having. Working with and in partnership with the grantees right from the beginning of the application stage, as SHINE does currently, will be important in making sure the evaluation strategy continues to be rigorous and yet pragmatic.
- ◆ One issue that SHINE might like to consider is whether or not to risk some longer-term projects focusing not only on explicit educational outcomes, but on other aspects that may facilitate educational progress. It is possible that enhancing motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence, and greater awareness of the purpose of education, could foster educational progress and hence outcomes. Such intermediary processes are likely to be of fundamental importance.

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