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Research Summary

Interim evaluation of the SpringBoard Bursary Foundation: key findings

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Interim evaluation of the SpringBoard Bursary Foundation: key findings

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Introduction and background

The SpringBoard Bursary Foundation ('SpringBoard') was established in 2012. It exists to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people through the provision of full bursaries at state and independent boarding schools. Through its partners, which include other charities working with young people, state day schools and local authority virtual schools¹, SpringBoard identifies pupils from low income families and disadvantaged backgrounds who have the potential to thrive in a boarding school environment. SpringBoard has a wider agenda of increasing social mobility through encouraging SpringBoard pupils to raise the aspirations of other young people in their home communities through sharing their experiences and acting as mentors.

The first cohort of 25 pupils started at 10 boarding schools in September 2013. Thirty-six cohort 2 pupils started at 19 boarding schools in September 2014, and an estimated 60 cohort 3 pupils will start in September 2015. Pupils join the programme in Year 7 (aged 11), Year 9 (aged 13) and Year 12 (aged 16). SpringBoard continues to recruit boarding schools to participate in its programme.

SpringBoard commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake a longitudinal evaluation of its activities and impacts between 2013 and 2018. This summary report highlights the findings from SpringBoard's first year of operation.

¹ Local authority virtual schools were first introduced in 2006. They support young people in care, helping them to access quality education and achieve their potential.

Key evaluation findings to date

SpringBoard is making impressive progress towards fulfilling its aims and realising its intended impacts on pupils, their families, home communities and member schools. Although based on a small-scale consultation to date, the evaluation findings suggest that SpringBoard is starting to positively transform the lives of pupils selected to take part. The sections below outline the effectiveness of the programme and the impacts that have emerged to date.

Effectiveness of the SpringBoard model

The unique and comprehensive network of support that the SpringBoard model provides is central to its success. This provides pupils with three-way support from SpringBoard itself, partner organisations and boarding schools. More specifically, the model is proving effective in the following ways:

- its partnerships with a range of organisations who are already successfully working with vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. Partners identify, select and prepare pupils for the programme and provide ongoing support during term-time and holidays
- the pastoral support provided to pupils by member schools, which includes a member of staff appointed to guide and monitor the progress of SpringBoard pupils
- SpringBoard's own support to pupils through an online pupil portal, hosting fellowship events for pupils and their families, attending pupil and parent forums, and visiting pupils in school
- the rigorous accreditation process boarding schools need to go through before they can accept SpringBoard pupils, as well as the assessment process for partners.

Impacts for pupils

SpringBoard pupils report they have made a successful transition to boarding school; they are happy and feel they have been accepted into their new school communities. They have been very positive about the support provided by partners and their school, which has helped them to overcome initial homesickness and adjust to a more academically challenging environment. Even at this early stage, they are reporting a range of important impacts as detailed below.

Academic and extra-curricular achievements

- Moving to boarding school is helping SpringBoard pupils to better meet their academic potential compared with their original schools. This appears to be the result of access to a wider range of subjects, quality teaching and high expectations.
- Pupils have also reported benefits from accessing a variety of extra-curricular opportunities. This includes opportunities to excel in areas such as sports or the arts, or to become a representative on a Student Council.

Broadened horizons and enhanced prospects

- Pupils have reported that attending boarding school has changed their lives for the better by, for instance, improving their prospects, changing their perspective on life and, for some, taking them away from negative influences in their home communities or schools.
- Pupils have higher study and career aspirations and feel that being at boarding school will give them a better chance of getting a good job than was the case at their previous school.

Development of personal and social skills

- Pupils have developed more self confidence and improved social skills through having to adjust to a new environment and making new friends.
- Pupils have also grown in independence and resilience as a result of adapting to life away from home.

Wider impacts

A number of wider impacts have been achieved for boarding schools and pupils' home communities:

- staff within member schools report gaining personal satisfaction and new skills from working with a more diverse group of pupils and supporting them to thrive
- half of all school respondents feel that having SpringBoard pupils in school has raised awareness of social diversity and broken down prejudice amongst pupils
- there has been a 'ripple effect' in some pupils' home communities, where other young people are now aspiring to follow in the footsteps of SpringBoard pupils, or have raised their aspirations.

Further information

About the evaluation

The table below details the consultations undertaken to date and the research methods used.

Consultee	Method	Numbers	Timing
SpringBoard pupils	Baseline survey	25 (all cohort 1)	Spring 2014
	Follow-up survey	25 (all cohort 1)	Summer 2014
	Telephone interviews	9	Summer 2014
Boarding school staff	Survey	8	Summer 2014

NFER will continue to consult with school staff and SpringBoard pupils who join boarding schools in September 2014, as well as tracking pupils who joined in September 2013. This will increase the overall number of consultees and the robustness of the dataset. In addition, an analysis of pupils' attainment will be undertaken using the National Pupil Database (NPD) to compare the attainment of SpringBoard pupils at GCSE and A-level with a matched comparison group of pupils from their previous schools. Further interim reports will be produced in 2015 and 2016, with the final report due in 2018.

About NFER

NFER has a worldwide reputation for providing independent and rigorous research in education. As a charity, any surplus generated by the Foundation is reinvested in research projects to provide evidence that improves education and the life chances of learners.

Contact information

If you would like further information on SpringBoard, or are interested in becoming a member school, please contact Tina Harrison by email at admin@springboardbursary.org.uk. If you would like further information about the evaluation, please contact the NFER Project Manager, Matt Walker, at m.walker@nfer.ac.uk.

NFER provides evidence for excellence through its independence and insights, the breadth of its work, its connections, and a focus on outcomes.

- independent
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