



National Research and Development Centre
for adult literacy and numeracy

The impact of family literacy programmes on children's literacy skills and the home literacy environment

Research Report

Jon Swain, Olga Cara, John Vorhaus, Jenny Litster

November 2015

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Project team

Dr John Vorhaus (Principal investigator)

Dr Jon Swain (Researcher, principally responsible for qualitative analysis)

Dr Olga Cara (Researcher, principally responsible for quantitative analysis)

Dr Jenny Litster (Project advisor)

Barbara Gougoulis (Project administrator)

The Advisory Group

In addition to the project team, the following individuals also attended Advisory Group meetings:

- Emeritus Professor Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield, Consultant to the Project
- Annabel Grant, Policy Adviser on Family Learning, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
- David Mallows, Director of Research, National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC), UCL Institute of Education, University of London
- Flora Sheringham, (Former) Manager for Family Learning, Cambridgeshire.

Names of places and people

In the interests of confidentiality, we have not provided the individual names of any Local Authorities referred to in the main body of text, and all names of individuals have also either been removed or changed.

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our grateful thanks to all the Local Authority managers, tutors, teachers, parents and children who gave up their precious time to be involved in this project.

Local Authorities which provided schools for the study: Bath and North-East Somerset, Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Buckinghamshire, Cornwall, Doncaster, Ealing, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Newham, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Redbridge, Sutton, Wakefield, Waltham Forest, Wiltshire.

We would also like to thank the Nuffield Foundation for funding for the research. The Nuffield Foundation is an endowed charitable trust that aims to improve social well-being in the widest sense. It funds research and innovation in education and social policy and also works to build capacity in education, science and social science research. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not

necessarily those of the Foundation. More information is available at www.nuffieldfoundation.org



Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a study of family literacy programmes in England carried out by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) at UCL Institute of Education (IOE) between July 2013 and May 2015. This mixed-methods study was funded by the Nuffield Foundation and explored: 1) the impact of school-based family literacy programmes on young children's progress in reading and writing; and 2) how parents translate and implement what they learn in these classes into the home literacy environment.

Key Findings

This research produced two principal findings. Firstly, family literacy programmes have a positive effect on Key Stage 1 (5-7 years old) children's reading scores: children who attended the programmes made greater gains in their reading than children who did not attend programmes.

Secondly, extensive changes in the home literacy environment (HLE) were self-reported by the families participating in the programmes: strong evidence emerged of increased parental understanding of school literacy processes and pedagogies over the course of the intervention, and of increased frequency in parent-child shared literacy activities. However, as no comparison group of parents not participating in the programme was available, this finding has a lower reliability than the finding on children's attainment and cannot provide evidence of a direct causal relationship between programme participation and changes in the HLE.

The study both builds on previous research and serves to confirm to policy makers that family literacy programmes are highly effective in reaching both generations. Programmes can improve reading skills, enrich family relations, increase parental empowerment, develop levels of social and cultural capital, enhance parent-school relations, increase home school partnerships and improve parent school alignment. Therefore family literacy programmes provide a wide range of benefits for family literacy providers, schools, parents and their children. There is a strong case, therefore, for maintaining and supporting these programmes.

Research background and aims

Even though previous studies have evaluated family literacy programmes, there are important gaps in the evidence base. Although several studies demonstrate literacy gains to children attending family literacy courses, few explore whether this attainment is any greater than would occur without the intervention. Little is known about whether and how family literacy programmes change home literacy attitudes, beliefs and practices, and how literacy acquisition in the home setting is achieved. Much less qualitative data has been collected, including from parents, as compared

with quantitative data on children's skills. And there are very few methodologically sound empirical studies based in England.

This study aimed to address these gaps by investigating three questions:

1. What impact does participation in family literacy programmes have on children's progress in reading and writing?
2. To what extent does parental participation in family literacy programmes change family literacy practices, attitudes and beliefs outside the classroom?
3. How do parents translate and implement what they learn from family literacy programmes into the home setting?

Methodology

The study combined a quantitative quasi-experimental design with the collection and analysis of qualitative data from in-depth observations and parental interviews.

The final sample of family literacy programmes consisted of 27 courses for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils and their parents, running in 18 Local Authorities in England. On average, these courses ran for 30 hours and enrolled nine parents and their children.

Children on the family literacy programme (the intervention group) and their classmates (control group) who did not attend the programme had their reading and writing measured using two standardised assessments at the start and end of the course. The achieved matched (using propensity scores) sample for reading consisted of 315 children (174 intervention, 141 control group) with valid data at the two test points. The final sample for writing across the two groups was 212 (108 intervention, 104 control).

Parents and carers on the programmes completed pre and post course questionnaires (118 achieved sample at both time points): a sub-sample of 24 parents participated in two telephone interviews. These methods focused on gathering quantitative and qualitative data about the home literacy environment, and parental motivations and attitudes. Survey and interview data, as well as documentation on teaching practices, were collected from course tutors, and observations took place in a sub-sample of nine family literacy classrooms. Findings about parents and the HLE are based on self-report evidence from those participating in family literacy programmes only, and are not made in comparison to a control group of non-participating families.

Findings

Impact on children's literacy skills

The family literacy programmes had a positive effect on children's reading scores: children in the intervention group made greater gains in their reading than children in

the control group. This difference was statistically significant, with an effect size of 0.17, which, although relatively small, is both robust and directly comparable with the effect sizes found in other family literacy evaluations. It is also noteworthy that these gains were measured in the context of short courses. The data did not provide evidence to support the impact of family literacy programmes on children's writing.

Some course characteristics appear to have an impact on attainment in reading, which has implications for the design of family literacy programmes. Children showed a greater increase in reading scores when their course tutors had received specific training in family literacy. The use of 'Big' books, and making story boxes, contributed to significant gains. Larger positive outcomes in children's reading were found when the reading process was modelled between adults and children during classes, when parents were promoted as role models and encouraged to have greater involvement in their children's learning, and when parents could focus on their own learning experiences. Further research is required to explore whether these gains are sustainable in the longer term.

One factor in the home literacy environment had a significant effect on improving children's reading scores: when parents read more after the family literacy course, their children's gains in reading were greater.

Impact on the Home Literacy Environment

The study examined four aspects of the home literacy environment.

1. Family Resources

In line with previous research, most parents who attended the family literacy programmes were women in their mid to late 30s. Two-fifths of parents were qualified to Level 3 or above, broadly in line with that of the general population, suggesting that the 27 family literacy courses did not disproportionately involve disadvantaged parents with low qualifications. In keeping with this educational profile, there were relatively high levels of book ownership: 67% of parents reported that they had more than 25 books (excluding children's books) in their home. Most parents (62%) spoke either mainly, or only, English at home; therefore parents with English as an additional language comprised a substantial minority of participants. For almost a quarter of parents (23%), this was not the first family literacy course they had attended.

2. Parental Literacy Behaviours and Attitudes

Parents' attitudes towards reading showed significant improvements between the start and the end of the course. There was no difference in reading behaviours, which generally take longer to change. Family literacy programmes that utilised the learning experiences and interests of parents were associated with greater positive changes in parents' attitudes towards reading.

3. Parental Beliefs and Understandings

The study found a significant increase in parents' confidence, which enabled them to better support their child with their homework. Parents also improved their understanding of how reading (including the use of phonics) is taught at school, and we observed closer parent-school alignment. As with changes in attitudes to reading, the data indicate that programmes which focused on parents' own learning experiences and interests were associated with greater increases in parental understanding of school literacies.

4. Family Literacy Activities and Practices

Overall parents reported reading with their children every day, or almost every day, and regularly supporting children with literacy work sent home from school. A much smaller proportion used specific reading strategies or practices, such as taking turns, reading loud or asking their child to re-tell a story. Although there was no significant change in the frequency of shared reading, or in parents helping with homework, there were important changes in the quality of the interactions in joint reading; many parents were found to be asking more questions to assess comprehension and there was a greater general focus on understanding. A further and potentially far-reaching change was that the reading experience had become more pleasurable for both parent and child.

Greater positive changes in the frequency of shared family literacy activities at home were experienced by parents on courses that offered more flexibility, took greater account of their own interests and involved them more in the programme activities.

Impact on school-home partnerships

The findings on the links between school and home literacies are particularly striking. The four reasons most frequently mentioned by parents for joining a family literacy class all related to school: 82% wanted to learn how to help their child with homework; 79% wanted to be involved in their child's school life and education; 79% wanted to learn how the school teaches their child to read and write; and 68% wanted to increase their own confidence in helping their child with schoolwork. After the course, parents reported that the most useful aspect was learning more about school literacies in order to support their child at home.

Family literacy courses demystified school literacy pedagogies and processes. Over half the parents said that, as a result of attending the course, they now felt more confident to go into school and talk to their child's teacher. At the same time, however, although a "top down" model of literacy, importing school values into the home, clearly worked for the parents in the sample, courses that in their content built on parents' own interests were associated with greater gains in children's reading, and with more positive changes in parental attitudes and understanding.

Conclusions and Implications

This study provides important evidence that should inform the design of future family literacy programmes. Certain characteristics of provision appear to have an increased impact on reading attainment. Moreover, programmes that utilised the learning experiences and interests of parents were associated with greater positive changes in parental understanding of school pedagogies, literacy attitudes, and in the quality and quantity of shared literacy activities in the home setting.

The study shows that the most common motivation for parents to enrol in a family literacy programme is to learn about school literacies and pedagogies, in order that they are more able support their children at home. Although almost all parents were aware of the importance of their children having sound literacy skills, parents also reported gaps in their understanding of how reading is taught at school, including the role of phonics in the literacy curriculum. Our evidence suggests that family literacy courses are an effective way of developing and improving parental understanding of these aspects of literacy.

Although much of the underlying pedagogy of programmes appears to require the transmission of school practices from tutor to parent to child, family literacy involves much more than simply 'teaching school literacy'; it puts the family at the heart of the educational enterprise and increases parental appreciation of their central role in their child's education in general, and literacy development in particular.

Implications: policy makers

- Family literacy provision should remain integral to government educational policy.
- Local Authority managers frequently suggest that family learning provision (including family literacy) is undermined by a lack of long-term, consistent funding. If funding were ring-fenced, it would be possible to plan provision strategically.

Implications: practitioners and providers

- Continue to use wider family learning (small 'taster' courses) as a first step to engaging schools in family literacy provision.
- Allow for the extension of short courses into standard courses where there is demand from parents.
- Build up and maintain key partnerships with schools.
- The messages that family literacy programmes lead to higher levels of literacy attainment and aid school improvement needs to be communicated more effectively to schools and LAs in order to encourage more schools to become involved.

- Some family literacy courses could be better advertised, and their aims spelt out more clearly to parents, particularly those harder to reach, with low level qualifications in areas of multiple deprivation.
- Tutors should receive specific training in family literacy pedagogies.
- There were larger positive outcomes in children's reading when the reading process was modelled between adults and children during classes. Providers should consider making this practice integral to all programmes.

Implications: research

Although the study has shown that family literacy provision has a substantive positive impact, further research is needed to:

- Explore whether changes in children and parents are greater when programmes are longer than the average 30 hours of contact time found in this study.
- Investigate whether gains in children's reading and writing are likely to be greater if more programmes return to the original "classic" model of the 1990s, including discrete provision for children in addition to parents-only and joint sessions.
- Investigate, using longitudinal methods, how enduring the effects of family literacy courses are on skills, attitudes, understanding, practices, relationships and aspirations, and whether these continue to change over time.
- Compare the impact for disadvantaged groups to explore if the programmes have any potential to reduce the attainment gaps. For example, to compare effect sizes between EAL and non-EAL children, low and high achievers using larger samples.
- Carry out further studies on parental attitudes and behaviours and broader HLE using larger sample sizes and control group to check the robustness and reliability of the findings from this study.

1. Introduction

This report is based on a mixed-methods study that investigated the impact of school-based family literacy programmes on young children's progress in reading and writing. The research also explored how parents¹ translate and implement what they learn on these programmes and if, and how, family literacy changes the home literacy environment (HLE).

The study was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and carried out by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) at UCL Institute of Education. The principal methods used were standardised child assessments in reading and writing, questionnaires with family literacy tutors and parents in family literacy classes, qualitative interviews with a subset of parents, and observations of classes. The fieldwork took place in England over four school terms between September 2013 and December 2014: it focused on 27 school-based family literacy programmes for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils (aged between 5 and 7), and their parents, running in 18 English Local Authorities (LAs).

1.1 Family literacy in England

The term 'family literacy' was first used by Denny Taylor (1983) who carried out research in the United States (US) during the 1980s with six middle-class families. Initially it referred to the interrelated literacy practices of parents, children and others in their homes (Barton and Hamilton, 1998), but it soon came also to be used to describe a research interest and a range of educational programmes for parents or other carers and their children.

Although family literacy programmes initially developed from an understanding of the vital importance of the early, pre-school, years in a child's development, and recognition of the diverse literacy practices found within families (Taylor, 1983, 1997), the majority of programmes now running in England are found in school settings, and place a significant focus on school literacies. Programmes in schools generally involve young children aged four to seven and their parents, and offer classes for families to develop their literacy skills, attitudes, understandings and practices together.

Recognising that parental education and skills are key determinants of children's attainment, the Labour government in England (1997-2010) saw family literacy programmes as playing a key role in increasing social inclusion and reducing intergenerational transfer of disadvantage (e.g. see *The Children's Plan: Building, brighter futures* (DCSF, 2007) and *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch*

¹The term 'parent(s)' is used throughout the report to refer to mothers, fathers and carers.

Review of Skills in England 2020 (DIUS, 2007)), and this policy was continued by the Coalition government (2010-15).

Although central government funding for family literacy provision² has been protected at £210m per annum since 2006/07, it has effectively been frozen since that point, and has not increased in line with inflation. In addition, and prior to 2011/12, whilst funding for family literacy was ring-fenced it was subsequently allocated to the budget of Community Learning and LAs had discretion in how to spend this funding³.

At the time this project began in the summer of 2013, funding for family literacy came from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), and family literacy provision drew on the funding stream from the Community Learning budget, based on priorities set out by the Coalition Government in *New Challenges, New Chances* (BIS, 2011)⁴. The family literacy courses that we looked at came under the programme element, entitled 'Family English, Maths and Language' (FEML)⁵. However, the majority of LAs also have access to a second funding stream, the Adult Skills Budget (ASB), which is used for accredited lifelong learning provision.

1.2 Gaps in previous research

Although, as detailed in Chapter 2, many studies (in the UK and internationally) have looked at the impact of family literacy programmes on a variety of outcomes (including children's and adult's literacy outcomes and family relationships), several areas remain unexplored or provide a source of conflicting evidence. This study addresses four gaps in the evidence on the impact of family literacy programmes in England.

First, although evidence seems to confirm that children's literacy attainment increases when they attend family literacy courses, little is known about whether this progress is necessarily greater than would occur without the family literacy intervention. As Brooks et al. (2008) showed in their evaluation of 17 quantitatively evaluated international family literacy studies, only seven used a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) or quasi-experimental design. Out of 11 UK-based family literacy studies, only two were RCTs, and only two used a quasi-experimental design; the majority of studies used matched-group post-test or one-group pre- and post-test designs, and, as a result, much of the evidence from these sources should be treated with caution. Although there have been other more recent reviews on family literacy interventions (see Chapter 2), we suggest that there is a need for more methodologically robust research, using RCTs or quasi-experimental designs, to

²This also includes funding for Further Education and Skills.

³ LAs were given certain discretionary rights. For instance they could reduce or cut funding if providers did not offer good value for money, or offer no or outdated accreditation (SFA, 2011:3).

⁴https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/145452/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan.pdf

⁵ The element used to be called Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN).

control for literacy development amongst children who are not taking part in special programmes.

Second, there are very few methodologically sound empirical studies specifically investigating these issues in England. Most research has been carried out in North America, Australia and mainland Europe, whose distinctive socio-cultural and political contexts lead to questions about the validity and reliability of applying such evidence to contexts found in England.

Third, although existing literature confirms the vital role of the family dimension in the literacy learning of young children and parents, research has very little to tell us about how, if at all, participation in family literacy programmes changes home literacy attitudes, beliefs and practices, and how literacy acquisition in the home setting is achieved. Although several studies have reported parents' views about the programmes (e.g. Brooks et al., 1996; Hannon et al., 2006; Anderson and Morrison, 2007; Swain and Brooks, 2012), there is almost no research on how parents translate and implement the messages they have been taught in family literacy programmes at home, and how this may change the HLE.

Fourth, the majority of evaluations of family literacy have focused on quantifiable outcomes on children's emergent literacy progress in terms of attainment; qualitative research on participants' views and experiences (both children's and parents'), and the so-called 'softer' outcomes, have generally received less attention (e.g. Horne and Haggart, 2004; Hodge, 2006; Nichols et al., 2009). Moreover, many of these studies are on a small scale and, perhaps for this reason, parents' testimony in particular is often neglected in academic discussion about family literacy.

This study builds on previous research into family literacy provision carried out by NRDC in 2007-09⁶. This earlier study looked at 74 family literacy programmes, from 42 Local Authorities (LAs) in England, involving 583 parents and 527 children aged between three and seven, and in this report we refer back to the former evaluation in order to highlight points of continuity and change.

1.3 Research aims

This is a mixed methods study, combining a quasi-experimental quantitative design with in-depth qualitative data collection and analysis derived from observations and parental interviews. Although RCTs represent the most rigorous research design, there are numerous practical difficulties of using this design in school settings, as

⁶*Learning literacy together: the impact and effectiveness of family literacy on parents, children, families and schools* (Swain et al., 2009). Available at: http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=162

highlighted in Brooks et al. (2008). For this study we opted for a quasi-experimental design: this allowed us to control for natural literacy development in children, and enabled us to produce robust evidence on the impact of family literacy provision.

The main aim of the study was to assess what impact family literacy programmes have on young children's literacy skills, and on the HLE. The principal hypothesis to be tested was that children taking part in family literacy programmes would make, on average, greater progress in reading and writing as compared with other children with similar characteristics who did not take part in programmes. The study also aimed to provide a detailed description of the HLE, develop understanding of the quality of literacy interactions, and show how parents translate messages from family literacy programmes into literacy practices outside the classroom.

Our three principal questions were these:

- i. What impact does participation in family literacy programmes have on children's progress in reading and writing?
- ii. To what extent does parental participation in family literacy programmes change family literacy practices, attitudes and beliefs outside the classroom?
- iii. How do parents translate and implement what they learn from family literacy programmes into the home setting?

1.4 Organisation of the report

Chapter 2 looks at previous research on family literacy and conceptualisations of the HLE. Chapter 3 introduces the sample and our methodology, and sets out how we conceptualised and operationalised the concept of an HLE.

Our findings are presented in Chapters 4-10. Chapter 4 discusses the characteristics of the families involved in the study and Chapter 5, the characteristics of the family literacy provision. The report then moves on to changes in children's literacy skills (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 introduces evidence on parents' literacy behaviours and attitudes; Chapter 8 presents data on parents' beliefs and understandings; and family literacy activities and practices are explored in Chapter 9. The focus of Chapter 10 is on a series of relationships, as between parents, children, other parents on courses, tutors and the school. The report ends with our conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 11).

2. Previous research

In this chapter we discuss previous research on the impact of family literacy programmes on children and their parents, and existing accounts of the principal models of family literacy provision. We explain how the home literacy environment (HLE) has been conceived as a mechanism for contributing to the impact of programmes, and we will see that family literacy programmes can have a significant impact on literacy and learning as compared with other significant socio-economic factors.

2.1 Family literacy programmes

The critical role of parents in supporting and improving their children's literacy and language development has been well documented over the last 20 years⁷. Previous research suggests that having a relatively poor level of general education has an impact not only on adults' life chances but also on those of their children (Desforges and Abouchar, 2003; Sylva et al. 2004; Parsons and Bynner, 2007; George et al., 2007; De Coulon et al., 2008; Melhuish et al., 2008). A primary objective of family literacy programmes is therefore one of reaching both generations with educational programmes as a means of helping to break this cycle of disadvantage (Brooks, 1998; Hannon, 1999; Desforges and Abouchar, 2003).

However, although there is a clear association between parental involvement and children's literacy development, a key question, as See and Gorard (2015) point out, is whether interventions that attempt to alter or modify parental involvement actually have any positive impact on the attainment of the child.

Carpentieri et al. (2011) examined a series of six meta-analyses of evidence on family literacy interventions (Nye et al., 2006; Erion, 2006; Sénéchal and Young, 2008; Mol et al., 2008; Manz et al., 2010; van Steensel et al., 2011), and conclude that family literacy interventions have a stronger impact on children's literacy acquisition than most other educational interventions. Five of these six meta-analyses found effect sizes greater than 0.3, and in two, the effect size was greater than 0.5⁸.

⁷See e.g. Hannon, 1986, 1999; Hannon and Jackson, 1987; Hannon et al., 1991, 2006; Whitehurst et al., 1994; Bus et al., 1995; Brooks et al., 1996, 1997, 2008; Hirst, 1998; Ofsted, 2009; Wagner et al., 2002; Desforges and Abouchar, 2003; Feinstein et al., 2004; Horne and Haggart, 2004; Hodge, 2006; Anderson and Morrison, 2007; St. Clair, 2008; Swain, 2009; Anderson et al, 2010; Carpentieri et al., 2011; Timmons and Pelletier, 2014; See and Gorard, 2015.

⁸An effect size of 1.0 is the equivalent of advancing a child's achievement by two to three years or improving the rate of learning by 50% (Hattie, 2009). Hattie has shown that the average (mean) effect size for educational interventions is 0.4. Most educational interventions have less impact than this: the most common effect size is 0.2.

As yet, there is little meta-analytic evidence comparing the relative effectiveness of different types of family literacy initiatives. Of the six meta-analyses reviewed by Carpentieri et al, only one –Sénéchal and Young (2008) – compared different intervention types. They found that programmes which trained parents to teach their children specific reading skills had a large impact (effect size of 1.15) on child literacy development as compared with alternative models. Sénéchal and Young also found above-average results (in comparison to other educational interventions) for programmes in which parents listened to their children reading; these programmes produced a combined effect size of 0.5.

Previously, Nutbrown et al. (2005) had also found that children showed greater progress in literacy when parents attended family literacy programmes that taught specific methods for improving literacy. Although this study looked at the pre-school period, Melhuish et al. (2008) cite a number of other studies that have found similar relationships between parents attending the programmes and the academic attainment of their primary school-age children (e.g. DeGarmo, Forgatch and Martinez, 1999).

In keeping with others studies (e.g. Hannon et al., 2006; Anderson et al., 2010; St, Clair, 2010), a previous NRDC evaluation of family literacy provision (Swain et al., 2009) found that the vast majority of parents were very positive about their experience of family literacy: 97% reported some kind of benefit during their course, and 96% thought that they continued to benefit from the course three months after it had finished. 64% of parents reported that since taking a family literacy course they had become more involved in their child's pre-school or school. 55% of parents reported that they had attended another course since their family literacy course, and 84% said that they were thinking of taking a further course. They also had a positive view of taking a national accredited qualification.

The positive impact of family literacy provision is also confirmed by longitudinal research. For example, the Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP)⁹ and its successor, the Mother-Child Education Programme (MOCEP)¹⁰, found long-term benefits in literacy and other cognitive skills. These gains extended into adulthood and were broad as well as long lasting, covering several policy areas, including education, employment and crime (Bekman, 2003, 2004; Kağıtçıbaşı and Sunar, 2001, Kağıtçıbaşı et al., 2005).

⁹The Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP) was an intervention carried out in 1983–1985 with 255 4–6 year old children from deprived backgrounds in Istanbul. The children of TEEP were assessed at four different time points — pre-program, immediately post-program, 7 years after the program and 19 years after the program.

¹⁰MOCEP is a 25-week long low-cost intergenerational, culturally-sensitive and home-based education/literacy development programme which targets socially disadvantaged children (aged 5 to 6 years) with limited access to formal pre-school education and their mothers, many of whom are illiterate or semi-literate. To date, MOCEP has trained 900 teachers and reached a total of 237,000 mothers and children, of whom 28,568 benefited in 2007 alone. Each year, the programmes targets around 45,000 mothers and children.

Long-term changes in child literacy are also more likely when family literacy programmes provide parents with training not only in educational but also in socio-emotional support skills (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1992; Kağıtçıbaşı and Sunar, 2001; Kağıtçıbaşı et al., 2005; Heckman and Tremblay, 2006; Heckman et al., 2009).

Mason and Allen (1986) and Zellman and Waterman (1998) found that the *quality* of parent-child interactions was more important than their *quantity* or frequency for improving literacy success. Kluczniok et al. (2013) also argue that the 'nature' of the activities is more predictive of children's success than the characteristics of the families themselves.

Although family literacy programmes may develop literacy skills for both parents and children, St. Clair (2010) maintains that it is also important to see beyond competencies and skills and to look at the social impact of these programmes on participants' lives. One way of doing this is to see how programmes create social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, 1997). Social capital may be developed through the improvement of parent-child relations, gaining confidence, changing aspirations, modelling behaviour and practices in class and at home, and improving attitudes towards literacy and school. 'Social capital' also refers to group membership and the formation of relationships – in the present context, this would include both relations between parents and teachers and parental networks within the school community. Parents may also gain some understanding of what counts as legitimate knowledge by means of a more developed alignment between themselves and their school; and they are then able to transmit this to their children, providing them with a form of cultural capital which is often needed to succeed in the educational system (Lareau, 1987, 2011).

The development of both kinds of capital has been recognised in research on family literacy. For example, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) reported higher levels of parental self-confidence and self-efficacy, and improved child self-concept as a reader and learner, following attendance at family literacy courses; Kağıtçıbaşı and Sunar, 2001, Kağıtçıbaşı et al. (2005) found increases in the motivation of both children and parents; and in a review of family literacy research, Carpentieri et al. (2011) find empowerment of low-income, poorly educated and/or migrant mothers as a common outcome of family literacy initiatives.

See and Gorard (2015) conducted a review of 1008 studies linking parents' aspirations, attitudes and behaviours to educational outcomes, and identified two mechanisms which may explain a causal effect of parents' behaviour on their child's school attainment: *parent as teacher* and *parent-school alignment*. *Parent as teacher* operates as an influence when parents' instructional behaviours, including reading with their child, appear to have a 'pedagogic impact or even a long-term impact on cognitive ability' (See and Gorard, 2015: 13). *Parent school alignment* refers to the extent to which school and parental cultural expectations and norms coincide;

greater parental understanding as a result of closer home-school partnerships – for example, sending home school work and shared reading - is likely to have positive effects on children’s behaviours and outcomes. The transmission of school practices by parents to their children, and their deeper understanding of the school system, might be described as a development of cultural capital.

Almost 20 years ago, Taylor (1997) argued that family literacy should not only embrace formal schooling, and the ways in which literacy is taught at school, but also take into account the cultural and language resources of the families who participate. She writes that, ‘the accumulated ways of knowing and funds of knowledge of family members – their local literacies – are complexly and intricately woven into their daily lives’ (Taylor, 1997: 3). Similar to Moll et al.’s (1992) conception of funds of knowledge, Taylor also maintains that family literacy programmes should focus on the literacy related assets or resources that already exist within families: these should be validated and programmes should support the work that parents already do (see also NALA, 2004, 2010).

Writers such as Borg and Mayo maintain that some programmes regard children as the ‘object of rehabilitation’ (2001: 245-266); they maintain that family literacy should be informed by Freire’s (1970) theory of critical pedagogy, which places learners’ own context, cultures and experiences at the centre of instruction. Timmons and Pelletier (2014) also caution against forms of family literacy that devalue existing language and literacy use, seeking to replace it with a privileged form of literacy found in the education system (Heath, 1983; National Literacy Trust, 2008). Writing about family literacy programmes in North America, Timmons and Pelletier (2014) argue that many programmes continue to use outdated ‘top-down’ notions of literacy that do not take sufficient account of parents’ existing knowledge and practices. This may be said to apply to at least some of the family programmes included in this study.

A number of writers who have pursued research on family literacy provision outside England, mainly in the US and Australia, (e.g. Auerbach, 1989; Reyes and Torres, 2007; Nichols et al., 2009; Anderson, 2010),¹¹ contend that the main reason that family literacy programmes use a top-down model that seeks to transfer cultural values, from the school to parents and their children, is that they are based on a ‘deficit hypothesis’ and ‘deficit thinking’ (Anderson, 2010:47).

Some of these arguments are related to how literacy is defined. A functional view of literacy, consisting of a set of skills and knowledge of ‘correct’ spelling, punctuation and grammar, has by and large been replaced by a model which embodies recognition of the complex and socially diverse situations in which literacy or literacies are shaped, learned and used. Scholars suggest that literacies represent a set of diverse and complex social practices (including digital practices) embedded in

¹¹The work of Anderson, Auerbach, Reyes and Torres is set in the US, while Nichols et al.’s is set in Australia.

cultural practices, and that these need to be understood in their socio-political context (Cairney et al, 1995; Barton, 1997; Lamb et al, 2009).

2.2 The home literacy environment (HLE)

The two main settings investigated in our study were the family literacy classroom on the school site and the home setting or home learning environment¹². Research suggests that the home learning environment plays a central role not only in the overall cognitive and socio-behavioural development of children, but also in the process of literacy acquisition. Furthermore, children's early experiences of literacy are highly predictive of their attainment in school, and a home learning environment is a powerful determinant of emergent literacy skills (Bus et al., 1995). The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study (Sylva et al., 2004) collected information on over 3,000 children in England aged 3 to 4, and found that several aspects of the home learning environment have a significant effect on children's attainment at school entry: these include the frequency with which children play with letters or numbers at home; parents drawing children's attention to sounds and letters, and the frequency with which parents report reading to their child.

Although many researchers posit that the best predictor of children's academic attainment in the early years is the level of maternal education (Mercy and Steelman, 1982; Sammons et al, 2004), Melhuish et al. (2008) maintain that this may only explain about five per cent of academic achievement (see also White, 1982), and that other factors related to socio-economic status (SES) have a significant explanatory role. Melhuish et al. argue that the home learning environment 'exerts a greater and independent influence on educational attainment' (2008: 106).

One further finding from the EPPE study echoes the argument from Mason and Allen (1986) and Zellman and Waterman (1998), mentioned above, which suggests that, although SES and ethnic background have been shown to be correlated with literacy practices in the home, it is the *quality* of a child's relationships and learning experiences in the family that constitutes the most crucial element. Sylva et al. (2004) argue that these experiences have more influence on future achievement than SES, innate ability, material circumstances or the features of pre-school and school provision. They conclude that 'what parents do is more important than who parents are' (Sylva et al., 2004: 1).

Melhuish et al. (2008) also point out that, when parents are working with their child together on stimulating activities – say, for example, linking letters to sounds – it is not only that they are helping children to develop these skills, but the multiplicity of learning opportunities in the home learning environment is also likely to develop the

¹²We are particularly interested in the home *literacy* environment, for which we use the abbreviation HLE, but many writers conflate this with the home *learning* environment. When research we are quoting from uses the descriptor 'home learning environment' we have kept the phrase as it originally appeared.

child's motivation for learning in general, and help to show children how to learn. Moreover children 'internalize aspects of parental values, attitudes and expectations (implicit in the activities of the home learning environment) as they form a self-concept of themselves as a learner' (Melhuish et al., 2008: 108).

Up until recently there has been a general tendency to assume that the great majority of children from low-income or ethnic minority families came from homes that were 'literacy impoverished' (Auerbach, 2001: 385) - where there were few books, and parents neither valued nor supported their children's literacy activities. This supposed lack of literacy experience was seen as one of the most important factors in the relationship between low SES and ethnic minority children's poor success rates at school. However, van Steensel (2006) points out that many of these conclusions were based on large-scale, quantitative studies which made use of a limited conception of the HLE, and that the posited relationships have been called into question as a result of a series of qualitative enquiries (e.g. Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Auerbach, 2001; Goldenberg, 2004). Goldenberg argues that well-thought-out measures of the HLE are likely to be more accurate predictors of children's literacy attainment than such factors as ethnicity and SES.

In this study we have made use of a conceptualisation of the Home *Literacy* Environment as distinct from the more generic home *learning* environment, and we have used a series of measures that draw on the work of Wood (2002), Burgess et al. (2002), Weigel et al. (2005, 2010) and van Steensel (2006).

Wood (2002) looked at the relationship between the HLE and the literacy attainment of 63 children in the first phase of primary education in England. Using a parent questionnaire, data were collected on the frequencies of four types of parent-child activities¹³:

- i. Story book reading
- ii. Letter-based activities
- iii. Singing
- iv. Playing language games.

Burgess et al. (2002) also explored the relationship between the HLE and the literacy scores of 97 four-and five-year-olds in the US. These authors suggested that the HLE can be described in terms of opportunities provided to children as well as parental skills, attitudes and dispositions that are related to the provision of these opportunities. They also argued that different parts of the HLE influence children's language and literacy development in different ways, and they compared the predictive value of five different HLE dimensions and the overall HLE:

¹³ Wood did not consider other aspects of the HLE such as parents' own reading habits or practices.

- i. The Literacy Interface
- ii. Shared Reading
- iii. The Limiting Environment
- iv. The Passive HLE
- v. The Active HLE

A brief explanation of these measures is called for. *The Literacy Interface* – that is, parents' own reading habits and views, including shared reading; *Shared Reading* – 'the most commonly used measure and conceptualisation of the HLE' (Burgess et al., 2002: 413); *The Limiting Environment*, that is, the social class resources available, such as parental education and occupation, as well as parental characteristics that included 'intelligence, language and reading ability, and attitudes towards education' (Burgess et al., 2002: 413); *The Passive HLE*, including indirect learning from models, such as children seeing parents reading books, but involving no direct teaching of skills; *The Active HLE*, defined as parents engaging children in activities aimed at developing language and literacy skills, such as shared reading and rhyming games. The *Overall HLE* was an aggregate of all these measures.

Although Burgess et al.'s conceptualisation of the HLE is useful, in that it highlighted its numerous dimensions, some of the categories are unclear and a few activities appear in more than one category, as with shared reading and parents' own reading practices. Moreover, some names of categories are misleading; 'limiting environments', for example, might prove empowering if parents happen to have high levels of social and cultural capital that allows them to provide a rich HLE for their children.

A more recent study by Weigel et al. (2005) built on Burgess et al.'s (2002) conceptualisation of the HLE, and on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of child development. Weigel et al. came up with four components of the HLE:

- i. Parental Demographics
- ii. Parental Literacy Habits
- iii. Parental Activities
- iv. Parental Reading Beliefs.

Most of these terms correspond to Burgess et al.'s conceptualisations. *Parental Demographics* are similar to the Limiting HLE; *Parental Literacy Habits* replaces the Passive HLE and Literacy Interface¹⁴, while *Parental Activities* is similar to the Active HLE. *Parental Reading Beliefs* is a new category and refers to parental beliefs and attitudes about children's language and literacy development, and the role they play in this.

Weigel et al.'s findings confirm the importance of studying multiple contexts (home and preschool) and multiple experiences (as opposed to looking at a single

¹⁴Weigel et al. write that they use this term 'because it is more descriptive of the aspects of this component' (208), that is behaviours that expose children to models of literacy use.

experience, such as joint book-reading at home), since, as they argue, literacy development is highly sensitive to context. In terms of children's outcomes, the study confirmed the significance of parental and teacher 'literacy habits, activities, and beliefs ... in relation to positive literacy and language outcomes' (Weigel et al., 2005: 228).

The move towards a more specific categorisation of the HLE by Burgess et al. (2002) and Weigel et al. (2005) has been extended by van Steensel, who maintains that the HLE should be treated as 'complex and multifaceted' (2006: 368). Van Steensel's research in the Netherlands explored the relationship between the HLE and children's literacy attainment in the early school years, and investigated whether the HLE was able to add to the predictive value of ethnicity and SES. He used a sample of 116 children (with a mean age of 6.4 years) and their parents. Van Steensel showed the importance of moving beyond income and education levels as indicators of SES, and produced evidence to contradict the claim that low SES and ethnic minority families fail to support children's literacy development. This also gives support to Sylva et al., (2004) and Melhuish et al., (2008) that it is not parental characteristics as such but parental behaviours that have the most significant impact.

Van Steensel used a parental questionnaire, which consisted of two parts. The first probed the details of *individual literacy activities* of family members (parents as well as older siblings), and included questions about 'reading books, magazines, newspapers, advertising brochures, making shopping lists, writing letters/postcards and using a personal computer' (van Steensel, 2006: 371). The second part focused on the frequencies of *joint literacy activities* involving the child (with parents or older siblings), including shared book reading, oral storytelling, joint library visits, watching literacy-focused television programmes (e.g. *Sesame Street*¹⁵), singing children's songs/rhymes, and shared writing activities. Van Steensel further divides joint literacy activities between parent and child into two sub-categories: activities that parents believe are highly valued by schools (e.g. shared reading), and those which they believe are not.

The number of books in the home

Finally, research shows that children who grow up in households where books are plentiful learn to read at an earlier age (Weinberger, 1996), and they achieve more in school than those who come from homes without any books, or having only a few. Evans et al. (2010) argue that a good-sized book library in the home is as significant as parental qualifications as a means of increasing a child's education level. Subsequently Evans, Kelly and Sikora (2014) used the OECD's PISA study¹⁶ to

¹⁵Sesame Street is a long-running American children's TV series, known for its educational content and cultural references.

¹⁶The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial international survey, which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. To date, students representing more than 70 economies have participated in the assessment. The most recently published results are from the assessment in 2012.

analyse data from 200,144 cases in 42 countries, and again concluded that there is a strong, statistically significant correlation between the number of books in the family home¹⁷ and children's academic performance. This was the case in every one of the 42 countries on internationally normed tests, even after controlling for other well-known factors correlated with educational performance, such as parents' levels of education, parents' occupation and family wealth.

For our study, we also drew on models of scholarly culture (e.g. Cook, 1997; Goldthorpe, 2007; Evans et al., 2010), which view books as material, or concrete, resources, and posit that the number of books in the homes indicates a family's commitment to investing in knowledge (Dronkers, 1992; Crook 1997). Books also have the potential to contribute to way of life that encourages children to read for pleasure and promote discussion, thereby increasing vocabulary, critical awareness and imagination (Bus et al. 1995; Persson, 2012, Price, 2012). Thus, Evans et al. argue, books both constitute a resource in themselves and indicate the likely presence or development of other resources related to cultural capital.

We have made use of the approaches surveyed here when conceptualising the HLE for the purpose of this study, and our account is presented in Chapter 3.

Summary

This chapter has highlighted the vital role of parents in children's literacy development, and presented evidence that family literacy programmes can be successful in improving literacy outcomes and in developing social and cultural capital. We have identified a tension between provision that aims to start from and make the most of parents' own interests, and 'top-down' models of literacy that seek to 'transfer' practices and values found in schools into the home environment. We have also discussed conceptions of the HLE, an environment which, we suggest, has a large influence on children's literacy development, and we will build on these conceptions throughout the report.

In the next chapter we present our sample and methodology, and introduce how we conceptualise and operationalise the HLE.

¹⁷ One limitation of the PISA survey was that no distinction was made between kinds of books, e.g. whether they were mainly for adults or children, or the quality of books.

3. Methodology

In this chapter we describe our methodology, including the study design, sample, methods, instruments used and analytical strategy. It provides details of the numbers of children, parents and family literacy tutors involved in the research, and outlines the assessments used for children's reading and writing, and the instruments used for the adults. In the final section we explain how we interpret and make use of the concept of the HLE.

3.1 Design

The study used a mixed methods concurrent embedded design, combining children's test data and administrative records from the National Pupil Database (NPD) with quantitative and qualitative data gathered from parent and tutor questionnaires, parent interviews and classroom observations. This design allowed us to embed a qualitative element into a quantitative quasi-experimental design. The quantitative element was designed to answer questions about the impact of family literacy programmes on young children's emergent literacy skills, and on parents' beliefs and attitudes to literacy and literacy practices in the HLE.

Qualitative data assisted in understanding how parents translated messages from family literacy programmes outside the formal classroom and into the home; the data also provided supplementary evidence of changing beliefs, attitudes and practices. Information gained from interviews and observations was used not only to explain and substantiate the quantitative findings, but also to explore such questions as how parents used what they were taught in the family literacy programmes in the HLE, questions which could not be investigated using statistical methods alone.

Since participation in family literacy programmes was based in schools and parents selected themselves onto the programmes, the study could not use a random allocation procedure to create a true experimental design. Instead, the study made use of a matched-groups pre-test/post-test, quasi-experimental design, in which a sample of children participating in family literacy programmes (the intervention group) was matched with a group of children with similar characteristics who did not participate (the control group).

3.2 Sample

In order for a family literacy course or programme to be included in the study, it was necessary to fulfil the following criteria. It should:

- be a family *literacy* course, as opposed to being a course designed for wider family learning or a family *English* course for ESOL students
- run for a minimum of 20 hours
- include both parents and children, as opposed to being for adults only
- include a majority of pupils from Y1 and Y2¹⁸
- be set in a school, rather than in, say, a Children's Centre.

A number of challenges arose in finding eligible courses and in pursuing the research as it was initially envisaged (details are presented in Appendix 1). These challenges fell into two groups: (1) difficulties in recruiting family literacy courses, and (2) reluctance of schools to take part in the research. The principal difficulties in recruiting programmes were related to changes in the policy context and funding (see Chapter 1), which had the effect of there being fewer than anticipated family literacy courses running overall, and fewer that satisfied our criteria for eligibility.

Additionally, schools were reluctant to get involved in the study because of the increase in workload placed upon teachers and pupils from our reading and writing tests. As an incentive to schools, and by way of rewarding their participation, each school was sent a detailed reading profile on every child that had been tested. Some schools, having agreed to take part, then wished to use their own reading tests, and this was not possible since we needed the testing procedure to be standardised.

In total, 27 family literacy courses, from 18 LAs in eight of the nine administrative regions in England¹⁹, participated in the research between September 2013 and December 2014. The courses took place in school settings in London (9), Yorkshire and the Humber (7), South West (5), North West (2), East of England (2), East Midlands (1), North East (1) and South East (1). One of the 27 courses ran for 60 hours and one for 40 hours; the others ran for 30 hours, which in a few cases included a number of home study hours²⁰, as distinct from face-to-face contact time.

¹⁸ It was thought that assessments in reading were not robust enough to measure progress for Reception children (aged around 4-5).

¹⁹ The only region not represented was the West Midlands.

²⁰ This is time allocated by the family literacy tutor for parents and children to work on family literacy activities at home but is included in the overall number of stated course hours.

Table 3-1: Characteristics of schools involved in the research²¹

	Categories	Number of schools
Size of school (number of pupils on roll)		
	Under 200	4
	201-400	7
	401-600	13
	Above 600	3
Most recent Ofsted grade		
	1 (Outstanding)	2
	2 (Good)	17
	3 (Requires improvement)	6
	4 (Inadequate)	2
Proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)		
	Below national average (19%) ²²	10
	Above national average (19%)	17
Proportion of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL)		
	Below national average (18%)	18
	Above national average (18%)	9
Proportion of pupils whose ethnicity is not White British		
	Below national average (29%)	17
	Above national average (29%)	10

All the schools were mixed or co-educational and were classified as being in urban areas, except one, which was on the outskirts of a small town; almost all were classified as having ‘no religious character’ except three (two were Church of England schools and one was Roman Catholic), and the great majority were Community schools except for five (of which three were Academies and two were Voluntary controlled/aided).

However, in many other respects, the school sample was diverse. The schools were set in eight of the nine administrative regions. As Table 3-1 illustrates, the most common size of school was between 401 and 600 pupils (13/27 schools), followed by 201-400 (7/27 schools). More than half of the schools (17) had take-up of free school meals (FSM) above the national average, and 10 below. The most common Ofsted grade was 2 (17/27 schools); hence, almost two-thirds of the schools were categorised as being ‘good’. Compared with the national average, two-thirds of the schools had significantly higher percentages of pupils whose first language was not English (18/27 schools) and whose ethnicity was not White British (17/27 schools).

²¹DfE (2013) Statistics - national statistics: Schools, pupils and their characteristics https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207670/Main_text-SFR21_2013.pdf Last accessed 1 February 2015 and underlying School Census data 2013.

²²All figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Numbers of participants

Children who were assessed

As explained in more detail in Section 3.3, pupils were tested in reading and writing at two time points. Children in the relevant years in the schools with family literacy courses were tested²³, even though only a small percentage of them were participating in the courses. In other words, if the school ran a family literacy programme for both Y1 and Y2 pupils, almost all Y1 and Y2 children were tested. This was to ensure a large ‘pool’ of non-participating children from which the best-matched control group could be drawn.

A total of 2019 children were named on the Y1 and Y2 registers of the schools where the family literacy programmes included in the sample were taking place. 1834 of these pupils returned reading tests at Time 1, and 1711 at Time 2 (see Table 3-2). The overall response rate for Time 1 was 90.8%, which was very high, as expected when collecting data from schools that are ‘signed up’ to take part in a project of this kind. However, when attrition at Time 2 together with the quality of data²⁴ was taken into account, the final proportion of valid tests available for analysis at Time 1 and Time 2 was reduced to 82.6%.

The final achieved sample consisted of 174 children in the intervention group and 1343 pupils in the control ‘pool’, for whom both pre- and post-test valid data for reading were available. Children in the intervention group were later matched – at the individual child level – with children who had not attended the programme. The categories of ‘school’, ‘pupils’ Year group’, ‘FSM status’, ‘gender’, ‘EAL status’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘Early Years Foundation Stage’ (EYFS) profiles were used from the NPD to match pupils in the intervention and control groups (see Chapter 7 for more details).

Table 3-2: Pupils’ reading tests sample

	Intervention	Control pool	Total
N on registers	238	1813	2019
N of Time 1 tests	193	1641	1834
% Response rate	81.1%	90.5%	90.8%
N of Time 2 tests	188	1523	1711
N of Time 1 and Time 2 tests	183	1465	1648
N of valid* Time 1 and Time 2 tests	174	1343	1514
% of valid tests for the analysis	90.2%	81.8%	82.6%

* We only used data from tests that contained at least 70% of answers.

²³ In two larger schools, with three and four form entries, it was decided to assess only the whole class if it contained at least two children attending family literacy programme. Therefore not every child in Y1 or Y2 was assessed in reading in these schools. Two schools were also only willing to test children’s reading, and therefore writing was not assessed in these schools.

²⁴ Quality in terms of missing or indecipherable names, dates of birth and answers.

We used the same matched sample for the analysis of the writing tests. However, the overall numbers were smaller because of missing and invalid writing tests, and the final number we used for the analysis was 212 across both groups (108 in intervention group and 104 in control group).

Parents who completed questionnaires

Out of the 230 parents who participated in the family literacy programmes, 202 completed questionnaires at Time 1 and 134 at Time 2. The attrition (12%) between the two time points is explained by parents withdrawing from the courses, rather than because they refused to participate in the second wave of research.

Overall, for the longitudinal analysis, we had valid data from 118 parents who filled in the survey at both time points. The number is lower than the overall Time 2 responses because some parents joined the programme after the first session and therefore did not complete the Time 1 questionnaire. There were no statistically significant differences between the socio-demographic characteristics of parents who responded only at Time 1 and those who completed questionnaires at both time points.

Parents who were interviewed

A subset of 37 parents who participated in the family literacy programmes volunteered to be interviewed twice by telephone. In total, we conducted 61 qualitative telephone interviews with parents, drawn from 17 of the 27 FL courses, between October 2013 and December 2014. Interviews were semi-structured and typically lasted around 10 minutes at Time 1 and 15 minutes at Time 2.

Parents lead busy lives and it sometimes proved difficult to make contact with them, particularly at Time 2²⁵. By the end of the fieldwork, 24 parents were interviewed from 17 FL courses at both Time 1 and Time 2 (a total of 48 interviews); four parents were interviewed at the end of the course only, but they were nevertheless able to talk about changes in beliefs, attitudes and practices (see Table 3-3 below).

Table 3-3: Summary of parent interviews

Number of FL courses involved	17
Number of LAs involved	11
Number of parents who were interviewed towards the beginning of the course (Time 1) and at the end of the course (Time 2)	24 (48 interviews in total)
Number of parents who were interviewed at Time 1 only	9
Number of parents who were interviewed at Time 2 only	4
Total number of interviews conducted	61

²⁵ For example, it took 56 attempts to speak to six parents from two programmes.

Unsurprisingly, the great majority of the parents who volunteered to be interviewed were confident and articulate. When we look at the profile of the interviewees (see Chapter 4) we can see that the great majority of them were White British, spoke English as a first language and were educated to relatively high levels. They also came from literate households (judging by the number of books in the home and their own reading practices), and this made it more difficult to evaluate changes and developments in this area at Time 2 – for example, in terms of their own reading habits and literacy interactions and practices with their children.

Family literacy tutors

Twenty family literacy tutors from 15 LAs completed a questionnaire about the course they had taught and, as three tutors had taught more than one course, the total number of courses we gathered data on was 25 (out of the 27 in the whole study).

Family literacy classrooms

Visits were made to nine family literacy courses in six different LAs (four in London, two in the South-West, and one each in the North-East and Yorkshire and Humberside) between November 2013 and November 2014. Researchers mainly saw adult and joint sessions; only two discrete children sessions were observed, lasting around 30 minutes each. The observations (apart from those at the South-East setting) lasted between two and three hours per visit.

3.3 Instruments and measurements

Assessment tests for children

We used a *Progress in Reading Assessment (PIRA) Test* (Hodder) for children in Year 1 (Y1) and Year 2 (Y2), which was administered by teachers at two time points: the beginning (Time 1) and end of the course (Time 2). We made it as easy as possible for teachers to administer the tests; they could be given to the whole class or to small groups, and took no longer than 30 minutes. The tests were designed to assess children's phonological awareness, their reading comprehension and the ability to read for meaning. The results obtained not only provide raw scores but also age-standardised scores, percentiles and reading ages.

To assess children's writing, we used the *Gorman and Brooks (1996) 7-stage emergent writing assessment*, which was again administered by teachers at the same two (pre and post course) time points. We used 2 sublevels in our analysis and the final scale ranged from 1 to 9. The tests also generally took around 30 minutes and could be integrated into curriculum time. The tests assessed children's development in writing in terms of its accuracy (early use of punctuation), early letter formation, sentence structure and meaning, as well as construction of stories and other types of text, such as explanations and descriptions. The testers were blind to

children's control/intervention status since the testing was done by class teachers with the whole class at the same time.

Questionnaires for parents in the family literacy group

Questionnaires for parents consisted mainly of multiple-choice questions, but Likert-type scales were also used. There were 22 questions at Time 1 and 19 at Time 2. The questionnaires (see Appendix 2) were distributed by family literacy tutors and took around 10 minutes to complete. Questions at Time 1 were devised to allow researchers to be able to categorise the HLE and included some demographic questions, including age, levels of education, parents' own literacy activities, motivations to join the programme, and other attitudes towards family literacy. The questions at Time 2 were designed to analyse changes in these attitudes, beliefs and literacy practices. Although most of the questions at Time 2 were therefore the same as those asked at Time 1, some new questions allowed us to look at the use of family literacy activities from the family literacy programme in the home, including the frequency and timings of their use, and the family members who were usually involved.

These data were collected to enable researchers to assess the extent to which programmes impacted on literacy practices at home, and to explore how parents used family literacy activities, translated messages and implemented strategies taught in sessions with tutors. It is important to note that all the findings on parents' and the HLE are based on self-report evidence from parents participating in literacy programmes only, and so are not drawn in comparison to a control group.

Interviews of parents in the family literacy group

One purpose of the first parent interview was that the researcher should be able to introduce himself and set up a time for the longer, second interview, at Time 2. However, parents were also asked about their motivations for joining, their expectations, how the course was organised, and their current understanding of how the school was teaching their child to read and write.

The purpose of the Time 2 interview was to assess parents' overall evaluation of the course, including the most useful parts, and to find out if, and how, they were using the activities learned in the family literacy class at home (including the amount of time they spent using them). Further questions were designed to assess changes and developments in their own, and their child's, attitudes towards practices in literacy, their understanding of how the school was teaching reading and writing, and their ability to support their child in literacy. The Time 1 and Time 2 interview schedules can be seen in Appendix 3.

Some themes that had emerged from the earlier conversations were developed and pursued in the later stages of the interviews, at Time 2, and these included exploring

changes in the *quality* of the interaction between parent and child whilst reading text together, and the effects of school's 'regular' homework on the time spent on family literacy activities during the week.

Questionnaires for family literacy tutors

Family literacy tutors could choose to complete a questionnaire either online (17) or as a hard copy (3). The questionnaire (see Appendix 4) consisted of 32 questions, mainly multiple-choice, although a few required an open response. The main sections collected biographic data; the characteristics and structure of provision; the curriculum; classroom pedagogies and organisation; and enabling and constraining factors of effective provision.

Schemes of work

Researchers requested a copy of the Scheme of Work (SoW) that tutors were using for their family literacy courses, and which formed the basis for the teaching. Altogether 26 were returned from the 27 courses. Some of the SoWs were either identical or very similar, and as a result only 20 discrete SoWs were analysed. The content showed considerable diversity: some were very detailed, set out over 17 sides of A4, others were set out on a single sheet, whilst the majority were presented on three or four sides.

Observations of family literacy classrooms

One of the initial purposes of incorporating observations of family literacy classes into the research design was as a means of quality control, to monitor whether tutors and parents were doing what they said they were doing. However, the visits also raised a number of issues and these are discussed at various points in the report.

One researcher attended one session from each of eight of the 27 programmes²⁶. During these visits, as well as observing what was taking place so as to provide a snapshot of what was happening on the course, the researcher often took a more active role and joined in with the parent activities, sometimes also meeting the parents who had been interviewed by telephone. A detailed descriptive commentary was written during the teaching session, with the prime foci being teaching approaches, teacher-learner relations, activities that were introduced, and the learners' response to them.

One researcher enrolled on a programme with her son and attended nine sessions: her evaluation covered long-term processes, and therefore provided a fuller picture than the snapshots from the eight one-session observations.

A more detailed description of the observations is provided in Appendix 6.

²⁶ We used a convenience sample using as diverse programmes as possible. The eight classes came from six different LAs: four were in London and four were in other parts of the country.

Administrative data and documents

A summary of the main methods used in the study is provided in Table 3-4 below.

Table 3-4: Summary of the research process and the instruments used

Purpose of activity	Method	Research instrument and method of administration	Timing	Participants (and numbers)
To measure children's progress in reading	Assessment of reading skills	Progress in Reading Assessment (PIRA) tests (Hodder) Year 1 and Year 2, administered by teachers	Pre and post	174 children in intervention group 1343 children in control group
To measure children's progress in writing	Assessment of writing skills	Gorman and Brooks 7-stage emergent writing assessment, administered by teachers	Pre and post	212 matched children (108 in intervention group and 104 in control group).
To find out parents' qualifications, attitudes towards literacy, literacy practices, and changes	Questionnaire	Short paper questionnaire, administered by FL tutors	Pre and post	118 parents at Time 1 and Time 2
To provide in-depth information on parents' attitudes to FL programmes, literacy practices in HLE, and practices implemented from FL programmes	Telephone Interview	Telephone interviews, carried out by researchers	Pre and post	24 parents at Time 1 and Time 2
To find out about organisation of classes and tutors' pedagogic approaches	Questionnaire	Short questionnaire sent directly to tutors – paper-based or online	Post programme	20 tutors
To evaluate pedagogies, organisation and relationships	Observations	Semi-participant observation	During the course	9 courses

We used data from two administrative data sources: the National Pupil Database (NPD)²⁷ and the Ofsted database²⁸. The Ofsted database was used to profile participating schools with regard to their inspection results. The NPD was used both

²⁷The national pupil database (NPD) is an annual data collection of detailed information about pupils in schools and colleges in England. The data includes test and exam results, prior attainment and progression at different key stages for pupils in the state sector. The database also contains information about pupils' characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, first language, eligibility for free school meals and special educational needs.

²⁸ Ofsted database contains official results of the inspections of maintained schools and academies in England

to profile schools, describing their social and ethnic diversity, and also to match pupils from the intervention group to the rest of the pupils to create a control group. We also collected attendance records for the parents and children on the family literacy programmes.

3.4 How this study conceptualises and operationalises the HLE

We built on theoretical perspectives of the HLE presented in Section 2.2 to conceptualise the HLE for this study. We categorised the HLE into four dimensions, which were used to organise and present our findings.

- i. Family Resources
- ii. Parental Literacy Behaviours and Attitudes
- iii. Parental Beliefs and Understandings
- iv. Family Literacy Activities and Practices.

Our categorisations were similar to those of Weigel et al. (2005) and, drawing on the work of van Steensel (2006), analysis also included particular activities that are commonly taught on family literacy courses, and which we believe are particularly common and valued by schools, namely, shared reading, help with phonics and help with spellings. We added 'understandings' to the category of parental beliefs, and listed many more activities and practices in our questionnaires.²⁹

Parental/Family Resources included (i) the ages of parent³⁰ and child; (ii) the number of children aged under 18 years living in the family home; (iii) the sex of the child and parent; (iv) the main language the parent spoke with their child, (vi) the parent's highest educational qualification; (vii) whether the parent had attended another family literacy programme; (viii) the number of books and (ix) and the number of children's books in the family home; (x) the parent's socioeconomic status (SES) (eligibility for Free School Meals [FSM] is used as a proxy for this).

Parental Literacy Behaviours and Attitudes referred to (i) the frequency that the parent read various materials (books, magazines etc), including digital texts; (ii) personal attitudes to reading for self; (iii) parental attitudes on the importance of reading with their child.

Parental Beliefs and Understandings included (i) how the parent rated the importance of school homework; (ii) their level of confidence in helping their child with homework; (iii) their level of understanding of how reading is taught in school; (iv) knowledge about phonics; and (v) who the parent thought had the greater responsibility for educating their child in literacy (reading, spelling, writing) - the parent or the school.

²⁹For example they include singing and playing language games, first categorised by Wood (2002).

³⁰ The term 'parent' refers to the parent who completed the questionnaire.

Family Literacy Activities and Practices concerned (i) the frequency with which parents or other members of the family (e.g. siblings) read with the child and (ii) helped the child with literacy school homework; (iii) the usual time of each reading session (e.g. before bedtime); (iv) frequencies of a series of specific interactions with the text while reading, such as asking questions or re-telling the story; and (v) the frequency of parents spending time with their children on a range of other, more specific, literacy-related activities and practices other than reading, including singing songs together, helping with spelling, writing, listening to audio books and borrowing library books.

3.5 Analytical strategy

Statistical analysis of the reading and writing scores was based on a combination of propensity score matching, difference-in-difference analysis and some standard statistical techniques such as comparison of the means, cross-tabulations, correlations and regression analysis.

To achieve the main aim of this study and investigate the impact of the FL programmes on children's reading and writing skills we used propensity score matching. Ideally we would need a randomised control trial to test whether the children's progress in literacy is necessarily greater than would occur without the family literacy intervention. However, because of the practical difficulties of using RCTs in school settings, as highlighted in Brooks et al.'s (2008) review, this study used a quasi-experimental design with propensity score matching that aimed to control efficiently for ordinary literacy development in children and produce robust evidence on children's literacy gains.

Propensity score matching (PSM) is a relatively new technique; it was developed by statisticians Rosenbaum and Rubin (1983) and the econometrician Heckman (1978) for estimating causal effects from observational data. A selection bias is usually inherent in the quasi-experimental design as it is not possible to randomly assign participants to receive or not to receive treatment/intervention. A PSM technique can be used to reduce selection bias and allow for quasi-experimental comparisons in naturally occurring intervention and control groups, which display a similar likelihood of participating in the programmes based on their observed characteristics. As previous research (Becker & Ichino, 2002; Luellen et al, 2005) demonstrates, results from quasi-experimental design studies using the PSM can quite closely approximate the results obtained from the RCTs.

The PSM approach has been used mostly in economics and health, but has recently gained popularity in studies seeking to evaluate different education and social programmes (e.g. Schneider et al, 2007; Barth et al, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2005; Morgan et al, 2008).

Propensity score matching was used in this study to match pupils in the intervention group to pupils from the same year group (but who did not participate in the family literacy programmes) to create a control group. This was done to control for different natural developmental trends (e.g. between boys and girls) and other differences in the rate of change in cognitive development for different groups (e.g. English as an additional and as a first language). We used the PSM to calculate the average treatment effect on treated (ATT), which is seen as a better indicator for the programme evaluations that target specific groups than the population-wide average treatment effect that can be calculated using the OLS (ordinary least squares) method (Heckman et al., 1997).

Matching took place at the individual child level at the analysis stage using multiple covariates including sex, first language, EYFS profile overall score and FSM. This approach helped to lessen the impact of selection bias and attrition as well as regression towards the mean. We used the STATA 'psmatch2' command to both generate propensity scores and calculate the ATT. We used nearest-neighbour matching with replacement that allows a more efficient matching with closer matches to help to minimise bias in the estimates of the ATT (Bryson et al, 2002; Frisco et al, 2007; Heinrich et al, 2010).

The difference-in-difference analysis was used to compare change in outcomes between the intervention and control groups to measure the impact of the family literacy programmes as the difference in the change between the groups. In this way the study took into account any cognitive and social development in children that would be expected to occur without the intervention, and any unobservable characteristics that do not change over time and are not correlated with the slope (size of the change).

Finally, at the last stage, we used correlations, cross-tabulations and comparisons of means to see if children's literacy scores were affected by particular characteristics of the programmes or of individual parents. We used linked data from the parent and tutor surveys, schemes of work, attendance records and reading tests scores to see if there were any specific characteristics of family literacy programmes that had an effect on the HLE. Furthermore, one-group pre and post analysis was used to investigate if there were any changes in the HLE concerning parents' own literacy attitudes and family literacy practices.

It is important to note that findings with regards to the parents' and the HLE are based on self-reports of parents from those participating in literacy programmes only, and so are not in comparison to a control group. As a consequence the findings about the parental side of the intervention have lower reliability as the ones on the attainment of children and cannot provide evidence for the direct causal relationship between the participation in the programmes and changes in the HLE. The data can only support the association between the parental involvement in the family literacy programmes and any changes in their literacy behaviours and attitudes.

The qualitative analysis was carried out using a thematic approach. Interviews with parents were recorded, transcribed and analysed. The analysis involved drawing out codes and themes from each transcript using a system of 'thematic coding' (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Whilst some codes were identified in advance, stemming from the research questions and quantitative data, others emerged through analysis of the data collected. After labelling observed patterns, and sorting, comparing and contrasting data, codes were placed in a thematic matrix (Symon and Cassell, 1998), where family codes of collected themes were used.

With regard to the mixed-methods design, our analytical strategy was to use two techniques to integrate the data. First, we used *data comparison through a discussion* (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). In the thematic sections we report statistical findings and discuss themes from the qualitative approach that confirmed or contradicted the quantitative findings. Sometimes these are exemplified with extracts from the qualitative data.

Secondly, we used *data consolidation or merging* (Louis, 1982). Caracelli and Greene (1993: 200) define this as the joint use of both data types to create new or consolidated variables or data sets. In this way we first thematically analysed tutors' schemes of work, and the qualitative description of the programmes provided by tutors in their questionnaires, and we then created the codes. The codes were added to the quantitative data set containing responses from the tutor questionnaires and administrative information about the schools involved. Finally, we used this new dataset as a basis for describing the programmes, and we linked it to the parents' questionnaire and pupils' assessment data to investigate which characteristics of the programmes had the most significant impact on parents and children.

Summary

This chapter has presented our methodology, and shown how it is related to the theoretical and conceptual material introduced previously. We set out the research design, methods and instruments used for the purposes of data collection and analysis. And we explained how we will conceive the HLE, and how this conception is to be operationalised.

In the following chapter, the first of six in which we present our findings, we describe the characteristics of families who participated in the family literacy programmes included in this study.

4. Family resources

In this chapter we present information on the parents participating in the family literacy courses, including their gender, age, educational qualifications, the main language spoken at home, the number of books in the HLE, and previous attendance on family learning courses. These characteristics can be regarded as family resources which serve to enable or constrain the development of children's literacy; they belong to the first dimension of the HLE outlined previously.

Profiles of the parents attending the 27 family literacy programmes are derived from self-completion questionnaires administered during the family literacy sessions. We also provide separate details of the parents who were interviewed by telephone.

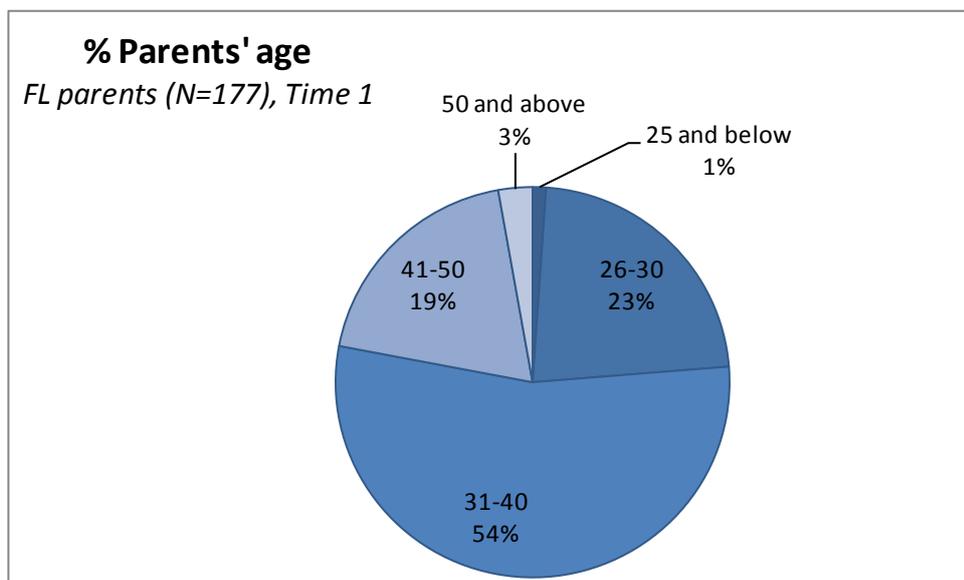
4.1 Demographics

The great majority of the participants (95%) in our family literacy programmes were female. Ninety-three per cent of the 202 questionnaires at Time 1 came from female carers, almost all of them mothers, and 5% from male carers (the remaining responses came from grandmothers (5) and one aunt). This is in line with evidence from previous research (e.g. Hannon et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2009; Rose and Atkin, 2007; Brooks et al., 2008; Swain et al., 2009; Swain et al., 2014). Only one man was observed during the nine visits to family literacy classes and only three of the 37 parents interviewed (including those interviewed at Time 1 only) were men. However, in telephone interviews many mothers mentioned that fathers also took responsibility for literacy activities, and that, on occasions, children taught their fathers how to play the games they had learned from the course³¹.

At Time 1 just over three-quarters of the parents were under 40 (77% being aged between 26 and 40), and just under one fifth (19%) were aged between 41 and 50 (see Figure 4-1).

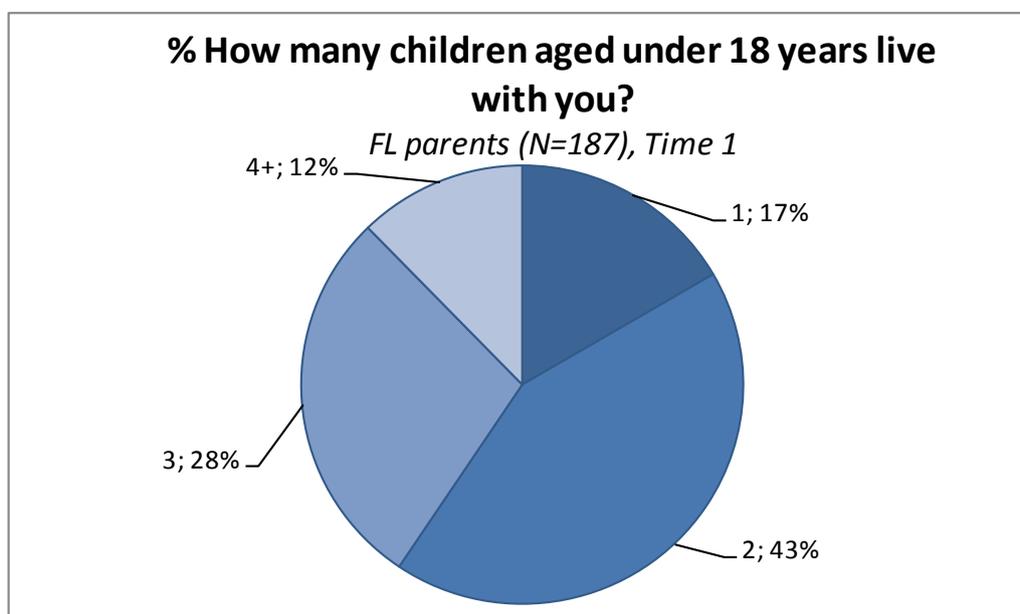
³¹In a summary of research on fathers' involvement in their children's early literacy development and educational achievement, Gladsden and Ray (2003) note that the earlier fathers become involved in the child's development, the better the outcomes for the child.

Figure 4-1: Parents' age



More than 80% of parents at Time 1 had more than one child under the age of 18 living with them in their household (see Figure 4-2); most (43%) had two children; slightly more than a quarter (28%) had three children; 17% had one child and the remaining 12% had four or more children.

Figure 4-2: Number of children



4.2 Educational qualifications and main language spoken

The two socio-demographic characteristics of parents that are typically mentioned as important in the family literacy literature are educational qualifications (Christian,

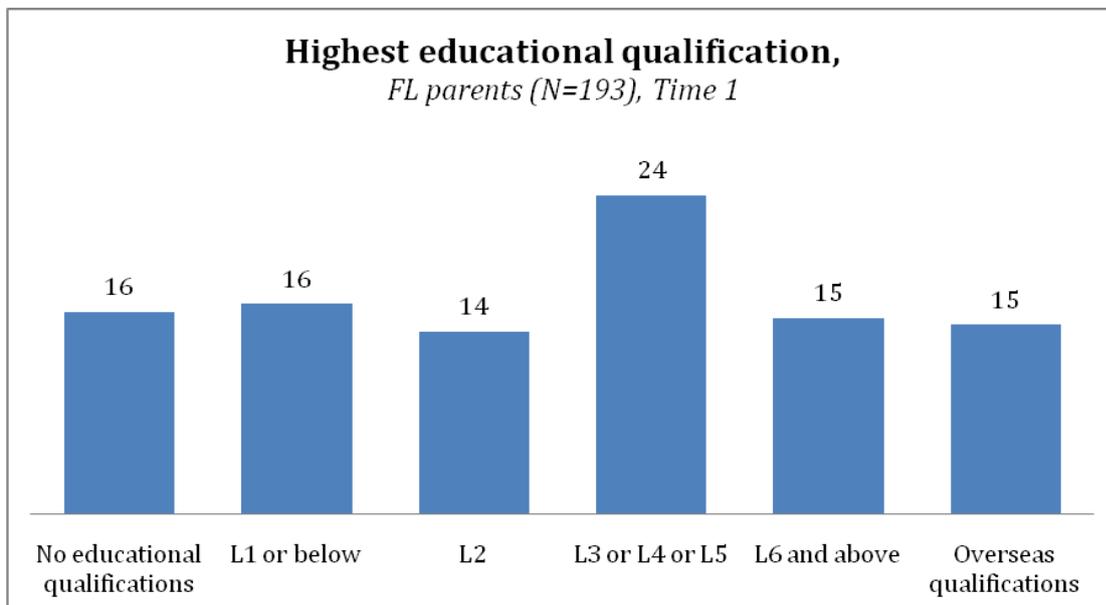
Morrison & Bryant, 1998; George et al., 2007; Burgess et al., 2002; Wiegel et al., 2005) and the main language spoken at home (van Steensel et al., 2006). Relative to the previous NRDC evaluation (Swain et al., 2010) the sample in this study included a greater number of parents attending family literacy courses who had relatively high educational qualifications and who spoke English as an additional language.

As Figure 4-3 shows, 16% of parents reported having educational qualifications at Level 1 or below, and 16% reported not having any (also see Appendix 6). The combined figure of 32% is only slightly higher than the percentage of the whole population in the UK; census data reveal that 26% of the population aged between 25 and 50 possess qualifications at Level 1 or have no qualification. Two-fifths of parents (39%) had qualifications at Level 3³² or above, including 15% who had achieved Level 6 (the equivalent of Bachelor's degree), or above³³.

Under the previous guidance from the SFA (and when most parents could achieve a qualification through these courses), parents with qualifications at Level 2 or above were often not eligible to enrol on a family literacy course,³⁴ but, as we will discuss in Chapter 5, arrangements are now more flexible, and many LA managers accept parents regardless of their existing qualifications.

A relatively high number of parents (15%) in our study had an overseas qualification, which is linked to the proportion of parents who spoke English as an additional language.

Figure 4-3: Parental educational qualifications



³²Level 3 is equivalent to A Level (or the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level), which is a school-leaving qualification generally taken by 18-year-olds in the UK.

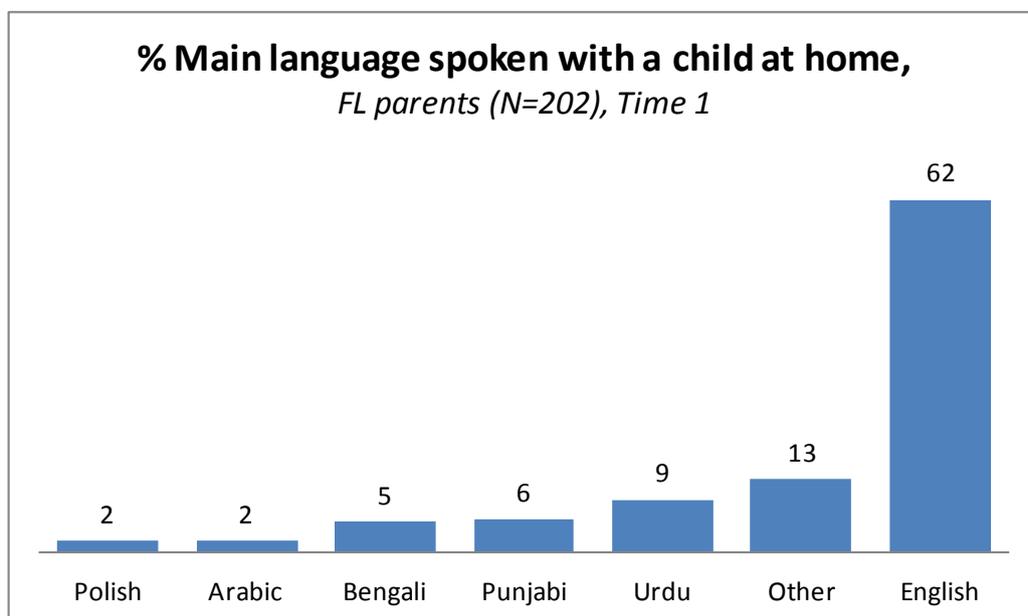
³³ However, almost half of those who returned profiles did not say what their highest qualification in English was, or were not sure, so that statements based on that variable are not wholly reliable.

³⁴ Some exceptions were made, for instance, if a parent had a particularly special need.

Figure 4-4 provides a summary of the main language spoken with a child at home, as reported by parents. Almost two-thirds (62%) spoke either mainly, or only, English at home. The most common other languages were Urdu (13%), Punjabi (6%) and Bengali (5%). The 'Other' group (13%) comprises a range of languages, none spoken at home by more than 1% of these parents. The appearance of Polish is consistent with the 2011 census finding that Polish is now the second most frequent language spoken at home in England and Wales, by 1% of the population.

As to be expected, there was a relationship between the educational qualifications and language spoken at home. Parents with English as a second language were more likely not only to have overseas qualifications, but also to have no, or lower-level, educational qualifications compared to those who reported that they spoke mainly or only English with their children at home ($\chi^2(5, N=193) = 45.46, p < 0.01$).

Figure 4-4: Main home language



4.3 Number of books in the home

We explored the number of books present in the home. Parents were asked to estimate the number of books (excluding any children's books)³⁵, and then to assess separately the number of children's books. Previous research suggests (Evans et al., 2010, 2014) that book ownership is often related not only to levels of literacy of both parents and children, but also to other cognitive measures. Evans et al show that children who grow up in households surrounded by books do better in school than those who come from homes without books. Evans et al. (2010) also argue that books both constitute resources in themselves and encourage the presence of other

³⁵Parents were told that this could include e-books, but excluded magazines and newspapers.

resources; for example, they can increase children’s interest in books and reading, and encourage discussions, which helps to build their vocabulary. However, although books have this value, we were unable to find out how many books were used in any one home.

As Figure 4-5 and Figure 4-6 show, more than half of parents estimated that they had more than 25 (adult) books in their households, and more than 25 children’s books. One fifth had fewer than 10 books (both adult and children’s). 16% had more than 200 adult books and 21% had more than 100 children’s books in their homes.

Figure 4-5: Number of books (excluding children’s books) in home

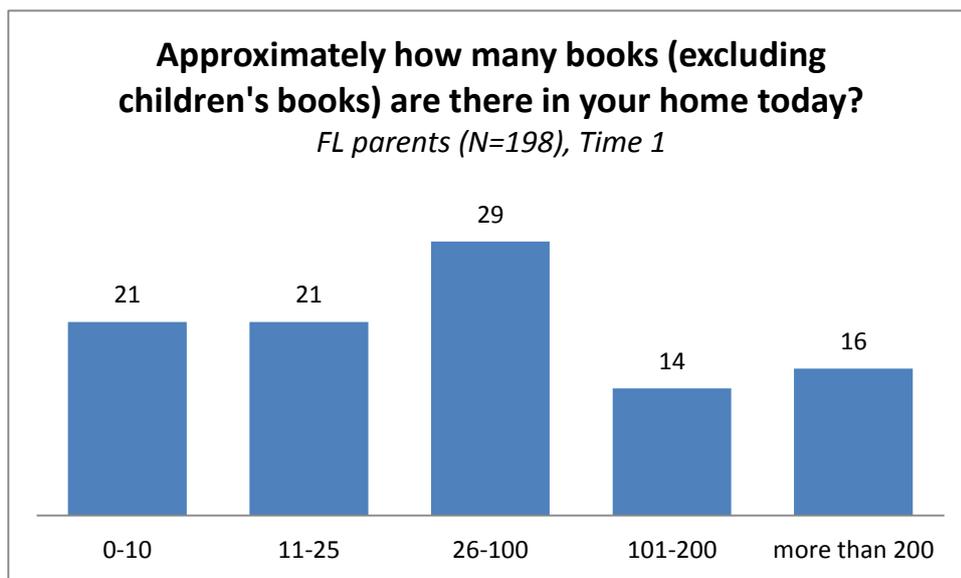
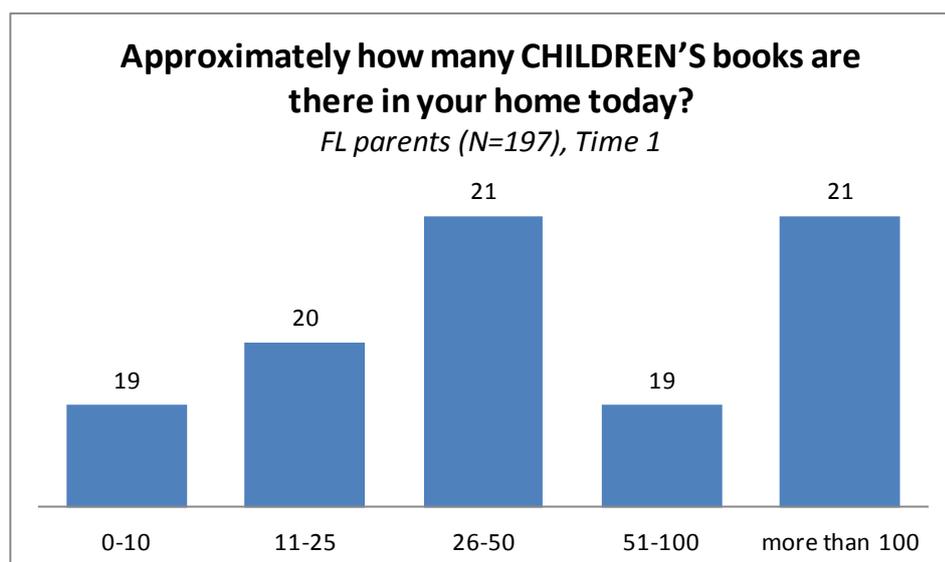


Figure 4-6: Number of children’s books in home



There were some statistically significant differences with regard to the number of books at home between parents with different qualifications as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(5,186) = 8.34, p < 0.001$ (books in general); $F(5,185) = 10.13,$

$p < 0.001$ (children's books)). Parents with higher qualifications (Level 3 and above) were more likely to say that they had more books in their house in general, and more children's books in particular, than those with qualifications at Level 2 or below, no qualifications or overseas qualifications.

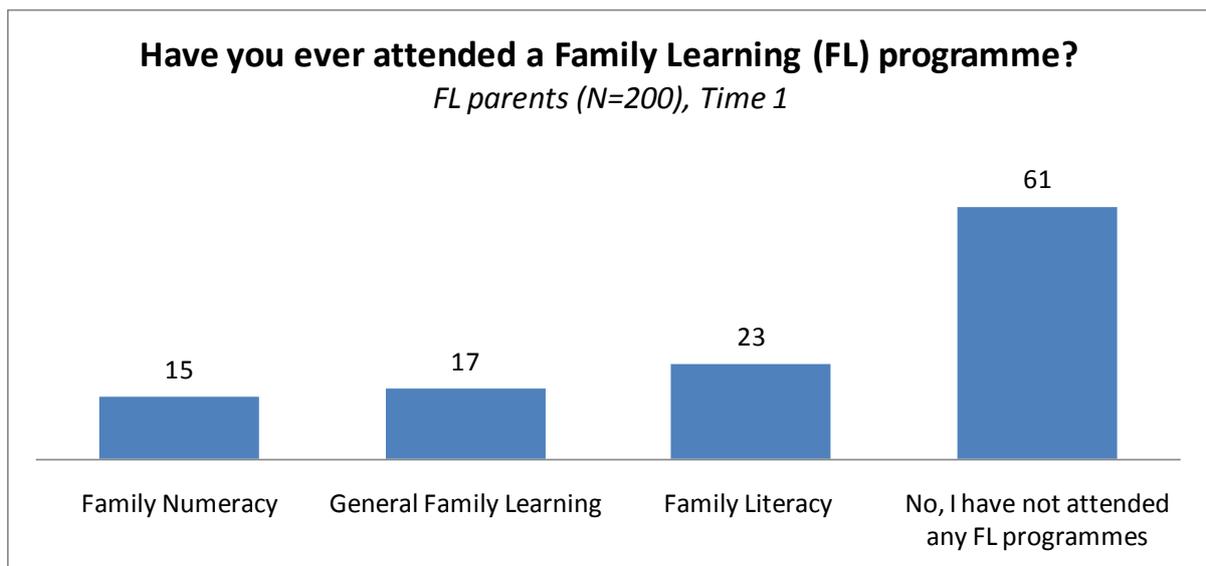
Moreover, parents who spoke a language other than English to communicate with their children at home reported having fewer books than those who spoke mainly or only English ($F(1,196) = 14.81, p < 0.001$ (books in general); $F(1,195) = 20.04, p < 0.001$ (children's books)).

4.4 Previous attendance on family learning programmes

We asked parents if they had attended a previous family learning programme, including family literacy. Conversations with LA managers and tutors lead us to believe that many of the 27 programmes we evaluated had held a previous 'taster' course, usually lasting between 10 and 12 hours, and not generally involving children. These were used to encourage parents to become more interested in their children's literacy development, to think of attending a longer course, and to inspire their enthusiasm for learning in general. Typical course names included 'Story Sacks' and 'Keeping Up With the Children'.

However, Figure 4-7 shows that, for three-fifths (61%) of the parents, attendance at one of the 27 programmes was their first experience of attending any family learning programme. Around one quarter (23%) had attended a family literacy course before, 17% had attended a general family learning course, and 15% had attended a family numeracy programme.

Figure 4-7: Previous attendance on family learning programmes



For some of the parents we interviewed, the family literacy course was one part of a package of learning, mainly for the benefit of their child, but also, in some instances, for themselves. Many of those parents had set out on their recent learning trajectory

by signing up to one of the ‘taster’ courses mentioned above, and had since progressed onto the family literacy course. Now they were also keen to take a family numeracy course (usually with the same tutor in the same school setting), whilst a few were intending to take Functional Skills English or GCSE English, and a small number were contemplating course not closely related to literacy, such as ICT.

Some parents spoke about a family literacy course that they had attended a few years previously, with another child in their family; although two parents reported finding their present course a little repetitive, they still considered it very worthwhile. One parent mentioned the pleasure of spending time working with another of her children (her daughter) and of the benefits of repeating the course for her husband and son, both of whom had attended an earlier course:

Overall I thought the course was excellent, and as I say, I’ve mentioned before I have done the course before with my son, but I wanted to just do it again with my daughter, obviously spend the time with her. And again I found there were new things talked about, and I had light bulb moments in this course. I thought I would just be recapping, which is always a good thing to do, but there was new things that I learnt again with [name of tutor], which again I could just implement with her and my son, and pass the knowledge on to my husband as well. So that’s been really beneficial, I’ve been able to pass more on to my husband this time I think than I did the first time.

4.5 Profile of parents interviewed

We should exercise caution when comparing findings from our survey and our interviews. Although the subset of 28 parents³⁶ who were interviewed by telephone did not differ substantially from the rest of the sample in respect of age and gender, more of the interviewees spoke English as their first language; they also had, on average, higher qualifications and more books in their homes, and a higher proportion said that they had attended some kind of family learning course before. This suggests that these parents were not representative of the whole sample: they tended to be more knowledgeable about how family learning programmes worked, and were likely to be more confident and articulate; they had, after all, volunteered to talk to a ‘stranger’ on the telephone³⁷.

Probably the most striking differences between the two groups were in the number of books in their households, and the numbers who had previously attended a course. Over four-fifths of interviewees had over 26 books (up to over 200) as compared with

³⁶This sample includes the 24 parents who were interviewed at Time 1 and Time 2 and the four who were interviewed at the end of the course.

³⁷We are also aware that this is a speculative assertion and that there may have been other contributory factors: e.g. they had more time, were less likely to be in employment and so on.

approximately half of the parents in the whole sample (although the estimated numbers of children's books were very similar); and seven tenths compared to slightly over half of the whole sample reported that they had previously attended a family literacy course, family numeracy course or general family learning course.

Summary

In line with evidence from previous research, most parents who attended the family literacy programmes included in this study were women in their mid to late 30s. A substantial number of parents had attended a family learning programme previously. It is notable that two fifths of parents had qualifications at Level 3 or above. Since the educational profile of participants closely resembles that of the population in general, the family literacy programmes cannot be perceived as disproportionately involving disadvantaged parents with low qualifications. The higher qualification levels of parents are also related to the relatively high number of books in the households. The programmes appeared to attract a relatively high proportion of ethnic minority parents with English as an additional language.

The following chapter provides details of the characteristics of family literacy provision, and includes a section on parents' motivations for enrolling on these programmes.

5. Provision

To describe the context of the study and to explain the intervention in the form of family literacy programmes, this chapter looks more closely at the details of family literacy provision. The chapter is organised under the following headings: the changing landscape of family literacy provision; programme aims and objectives; the structure of programmes; the resources and characteristics of the family literacy tutors; pedagogical features; enabling and constraining factors of successful provision; and parents' motivations for joining family literacy classes. For more information on the curriculum, see Appendix 8.

5.1 The changing landscape of family literacy provision

Although most family literacy provision is provided by LAs, we found that a growing number of family literacy programmes were being 'outsourced', a trend that was recorded five years earlier by Mead and Thomas (2010).

Detailed guidance from the SFA concerning Family English, Maths and Language (FEML) provision has not greatly changed since 2011/12, and most family literacy provision uses similar delivery models. Overall, there are now fewer statutory requirements than were found during the previous NRDC evaluation, and there is more flexibility for managers to make decisions at the local level, a change that was generally welcomed. The decisions most managers tended to make about the detail of provision were based on the previous SFA guidance (e.g. from SFA 2012/13), but we noticed significant differences in the delivery of courses observed in this study as compared with our previous evaluation. There were six principal differences: a) number of learners per course; b) qualification entry requirements for learners; c) opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications; d) the practice of learners repeating family literacy courses; (e) the lack of discrete provision for children; and (f) the means by which children were assigned to the programme. It is important to emphasise that managers' decisions about these matters typically reflected the detail and priorities that applied to their local contexts.

Number of learners per course

At the time of NRDC's previous evaluation there was a requirement of a minimum of nine learners per course. Although most LAs still use this figure for guidance, individual services are now able to determine minimum attendance requirements on the basis of their budgets and staffing costs. 11 courses were running with an average attendance of six learners or less.

Entry qualifications to the course

Formerly there was a requirement not to enrol parents whose highest qualification in English or maths was at Level 2 or above on FEML programmes³⁸. This is no longer the case. As reported in Section 4.2, 40% of adult learners on the 27 courses we studied held qualifications at Level 3 or above. While an aim for many programmes was to target parents with low or no qualifications from deprived areas, in the absence of a qualification requirement, most managers did not prevent parents from joining if they were already at Level 2. Some providers were stricter on this than others, but this is a 'grey area'. For instance, most would accept parents onto a course if they had an English qualification, even if this was an 'old' qualification, and 'old' is open to local interpretation. Some managers did not exclude learners who had Level 2 from a family literacy course, and they interpreted the most recent guidance as being based on need, rather than previous qualification level. If the majority of other learners in the class had relatively low qualifications, a learner with higher skills was often included to make up the numbers, and if a learner had learning or mental health issues they too would be accepted onto the course.

Taking qualifications

A further change from past practice was that most courses did not provide opportunities for parent learners to gain national accreditations³⁹. The reasons related to the introduction of Functional Skills (FS) qualifications in 2012-2103. These new qualifications require learners to spend more time studying as compared with Skills for Life accreditations. As a result of new curriculum areas and forms of assessment in respect of Speaking and Listening, and 'free' compositional writing,⁴⁰ FS tests are regarded as more rigorous, and many programme leaders judged that there was insufficient time in a 30-hour course to work towards accreditation. As FS English requires 45 guided learning hours as a minimum, a small number of family literacy courses offered one of the three functional skills (reading, writing or speaking and listening), and a few courses also offered 'bite size' units such as the City and Guild 3847 English/maths units⁴¹. It was easier to deliver FS on longer courses and some LAs planned their Family English programmes for 60 hours, with the last six weeks being focussed exclusively on the examination. This was programmed as a separate course and ASB funding was claimed for this. However not all LAs were able, or they decided against trying to access ASB funding for family literacy provision, and to the best of our knowledge none of the 27 courses in the study used this model.

³⁸This was specified in the SFA Funding Rules up to 2012/13 – FEML programmes must not be delivered to Learners who have already achieved both a Maths and English qualification at Level 2. However, a Learner with only Maths, or English, at Level 2 will be eligible.

³⁹Some LA managers also told us that the removal of smaller units from the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) had had a large impact.

⁴⁰In the previous, Skills for Life literacy tests, writing was only assessed with the use of multiple-choice questions.

⁴¹From 2015/16 only FS at Level 2 will be funded.

Learners repeating family literacy courses

At the time of the previous NRDC evaluation learners were not allowed to attend more than one family literacy course. However, some adult learners who participated in the current study had also taken the same family literacy course (often with the same tutor) with one of their older children; the SFA would fund learners for a second course as long as they were retaking it in a different academic year.

Lack of discrete provision for children

Although some other programmes still follow the orthodox or ‘classic’⁴² model of provision found in the earlier NRDC evaluation, far fewer programmes in this study offered separate sessions for children. This was related to pressures on schools and their achievement rates; schools were less ready to release children from so much curriculum time, particularly when in Year 2 and working towards their KS1 SATs. We also found that some schools were not prepared to fund a supply teacher to allow for the release of a KS1 teacher to take child-only sessions, even though the LA would generally be prepared to fund this provision, and, in some cases, provide the KS1 teacher.

The way children are assigned to the programme

A further difference between family literacy programmes at the time of the earlier NRDC evaluation and the current study is that the children in this study are not always selected for family literacy classes on the basis of their poor literacy skills. In many cases their participation is a result of their parents having elected to enrol on courses for their own reasons, which are not always connected to their children’s literacy needs. Some children (and their parents) had sound or above average literacy skills when they began their course and, as we will see in section 5.7, parents’ primary motivation was often to learn how the school taught literacy, rather than to improve their child’s literacy abilities or needs.

5.2 Aims and objectives of the provision

The tutors’ survey reveals that the titles of the courses varied considerably and included nine different headings; the most common name was ‘Family Literacy’ (11), followed by ‘Family English’ (4).

Meade and Thomas (2010) and Swain et al., (2009) have previously highlighted tensions between schools and family literacy providers stemming from having competing priorities. Whereas for some schools the main purpose of family literacy programmes is to contribute to increasing school attainments and standards, family literacy providers see the potential for benefits for both adults and children - adults

⁴² This was the model evaluated in the Demonstration Programmes of the mid-1990s, and generally consisted of parents-only and children-only classes running in parallel, followed by a joint session of parents and their children. See Brooks et al. (1996, 1997).

can develop their own skills whilst also creating a culture of literacy learning for their children at home.

Almost four in five (79%) parents in our study reported that their principal motivation for attending a family literacy course was 'to learn how the school teaches my child to read and write'. We therefore began our analysis of schemes of work (SoWs) by looking at whether learning how the school teaches reading and writing was explicitly included in the course aims.

From the 20 SoWs analysed:

- three did not include any course aims or objectives
- 11 made specific links to school literacies in the course aims and objectives
- six made no specific links to school literacies in their main written priorities.

Thus, only just over half of the SoWs made specific mention of the link to school literacies. Below is an example from one LA⁴³ where school literacies were explicitly highlighted in the SoW as a central course aim. The course was designed for parents:

'To be more familiar with the school curriculum in relation to literacy and understand some of the associated language and teaching methods used today.'

Among SoW's that did not mention school literacies, the stated aims were for parents to:

- identify everyday opportunities in reading
- demonstrate how to make reading fun with their child
- be able to state the importance of their role as their child's educator.

The SFA (2015:148) guidance states that FEML programmes must fulfil all of the following three requirements. They must:

- i) aim to improve the English, Maths or Language skills of parents or other carers
- ii) aim to improve parents'/carers' ability to help their children learn
- iii) aim to improve children's acquisition of English and/or Maths and/or Language.

However, the SoWs revealed great variety in the aims that they set out to cover. While all courses contained the aim of improving parents' ability to help their children learn or acquire (literacy) skills (Aim 2 in the SFA's guidance), there was varying emphasis on the other two aims, depending on the 'type' of parents the course attracted, the relationship between the family literacy manager and the school, and

⁴³ As stated earlier, we anonymised all references to LAs and specific programmes.

the funding stream that the family literacy course was able to draw on. There was generally a greater focus on parents learning how to support their children, rather than on the children themselves (Aim 3 in the SFA's guidance).

Programmes that were running in areas where the great majority of learners were second-language speakers put greater emphasis on developing parents' speaking and listening skills. The following text was included in the aims outlined in the SoW from an inner city LA.

In order to accommodate learners' needs in this group, there will be references to learners' own literacy skills as some parents and a few children are second language speakers. New terms will be explained and defined for all learners. There will be differentiation for second and first language learners as well as a variety of different learning approaches to support all learners.

5.3 Structure of family literacy programmes

The most common model, used in 21 of the 27 courses, was a parents-only session followed by a joint parent-children session. Parents-only sessions ran for, on average, 1.5 to 2 hours and totalled 20 hours (ranging from 10 to 45 hours) over the whole course. The average length of joint sessions was 30 minutes to 1 hour, totalling nine hours over the whole course (ranging from 5 to 20 hours).

Only a quarter (7/27) of programmes built in discrete provision for children with a KS1 teacher⁴⁴, and this marked a significant change from our previous evaluation. The total time for children-only sessions was 14 hours on average, ranging from 7.5 hours to 20 hours over the whole course, and on average sessions ran for an hour.

Most programmes run during the school day, often in the morning or early afternoon. Analysis of attendance records showed that the average number of parents who began a family literacy course was nine, and 80% attended at least half the sessions. However, 17% of parents attended only one third of the sessions, with 12% coming to one session only.

One issue that emerged from six of the nine class observations was that the actual amount of teaching contact time was shorter than the timetable suggests. For instance, one course, timetabled to run from 9.00-12.00 over 10 weeks, began on the day of the observation at 9.20 and finished at 11.30. Not all parents were present when the class was due to begin. Many arrived and made themselves a hot drink and talked to each other before settling down to learn. This was all part of the relaxed and informal atmosphere that family literacy tutors aim to create, but it did have the consequence that contact teaching and learning time was less than stated.

⁴⁴This was generally taught by a qualified KS1 teacher from within the school, but this was not always the case. For instance one of the LAs provided their own early years teacher for one of the nine programmes that we observed.

An example, taken from fieldnotes, is given in Figure 5-1, detailing a class with eight parents enrolled:

Figure 5-1: class running over fewer hours than officially stated

30.11.14

The class ran from 9.00 to 12.00 (3 hours per week over 10 weeks). At 9.00 – only 2 parents present. 3rd arrives at 9.15 and makes herself a drink; a 4th comes at 9.25. The 5th comes at 9.30 and this is when the class really got going. I left at 9.30 to see the children’s session and when I came back at 10.05 there were 7 parents present. Class finished at 11.40 when children leave to wash their hands before lunch. Although the course is billed at 3 hours, today it only lasted about 2.25 hours. So it’s doubtful if parents get more than 25 hours contact time over the whole course

5.4 Resources and tutors’ characteristics

The tutors generally perceived the physical environment and material resources where they taught as being of high quality. 21 of 25 physical spaces were rated as either ‘very good’ or ‘good’, and 23 of 25 courses had ‘very good’ or ‘good’ teaching materials and resources. The judgement of the researchers was that the quality of the settings to be very good: parents generally sat on adult chairs; the room had tea/coffee-making facilities and a sink to wash up in; there was sufficient space to work in, and it was well lit; and for most of the time it was free from distracting extraneous noise.

However, tutors reported that there was relatively little use of interactive and digital equipment such as interactive whiteboards, computers and the Internet, and they also reported these types of resources as being ‘average’ to ‘poor’ on 17 of 25 courses. Half of the courses (13 of 25) did not provide a crèche; this represent a large difference from our previous evaluation, when, for the majority of managers, a crèche was a non-negotiable prerequisite for any course. Not having a crèche makes it very difficult for parents with preschool children to attend, but often, as family literacy managers and tutors explained, this was a decision taken to save the cost of employing a crèche worker, and to save the schools the need to find a suitable space.

Of the twenty tutors who completed the questionnaire, 18 were women and two were men; 16 categorised their ethnicity as ‘White British’, two as Asian, one as Caribbean and one as British-Italian. There were very few young tutors: the average age was 52 years, ranging from 33 to 63.

The tutors held a variety of teaching qualifications⁴⁵ but more than half (12) had either a PGCE or Cert Ed qualification for teaching in a post-compulsory setting. One family literacy tutor reported having a PGCE in secondary education and two a BEd in primary education. The majority of tutors (17 of 20) held a qualification in teaching adult English/literacy. The range of these qualifications was diverse: nine had literacy subject specialist qualifications, two had a PGCE in teaching English/literacy to adults and four had qualifications in teaching ESOL. Seven tutors reported that they had attended specific professional development training in teaching family literacy. The average number of hours for the training was 40, but we have no details of its nature or content.

5.5 Pedagogical features

Family learning in general, and family literacy in particular, draw on the traditions of adult literacy, early learning, parenting skills, parental involvement in schools, supporting children's learning, and school improvement. The main pedagogical approach, or underlying philosophy of teaching, which was observed in the nine classes is summarised by the nine points below. The approach is one that:

- i. develops understandings of the pedagogical approaches used in school;
- ii. develops parental understandings of educational and school literacy processes;
- iii. promotes the family as a key unit of learning and the home setting as a vital learning environment;
- iv. promotes parent-child relationships;
- v. increases parents' awareness of the importance of their support in their child's education, including their role as the child's first literacy mentor;
- vi. increases parents' awareness of presenting opportunities for children's literacy development;
- vii. promotes a culture of aspiration for parents and children;
- viii. promotes a culture of collaborative learning for parents and children;
- ix. increases children's and parents' literacy knowledge and skills.

These approaches⁴⁶ are also confirmed by tutors and parents in the surveys and interviews. It is worth observing that the first eight components are difficult to capture as part of the wider impact and benefits of programmes, particularly within the period of one school term.

One approach that was rarely observed and did not appear to be a central feature of provision was that of tutors building on the parents' home culture and experiences of literacy; many researchers regard this as an essential feature of family literacy

⁴⁵Tutors were asked to state their highest teaching qualification.

⁴⁶Some of these features have similarities with those identified by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) in Ireland. See the report: *Taking care of family literacy work* (2010). <https://www.nala.ie/resources/taking-care-family-literacy-work>, and we draw on this source.

provision (e.g. Topping and Wolfendale, 1995; Taylor, 1997; Borg and Mayo, 2001; Timmons and Pelletier, 2014). This is not to say that this does not happen in family literacy provision, but that it was not directly observed in the classes we visited. At the same time, the tutor survey, and informal conversations and email exchanges with some tutors, reveals that parents' practices were integrated into tutors' curriculum plans. Nevertheless, there was little reference to this in SoWs, and the predominant approach was one of families learning about and importing strategies and practices of literacy teaching from the school into the home (see point ii above).

Although parents readily asked tutors to address their queries and concerns, the general impression gained was that there is a 'correct', school based method of teaching and learning literacy. Some commentators (e.g. Auerbach, 1989; Wolfendale and Topping, 1995, 1996; Reyes and Torres, 2007; Nichols et al., 2009; Anderson, 2010) have criticised what they describe as a 'top-down' model of family literacy; they regard it as involving the transmission of school values to parents and to their children, and based on a 'deficit hypothesis' or 'deficit thinking' (Anderson, 2010:47).

There appeared to be elements of this approach to literacy in the family literacy courses observed in this study. On the one hand, tutors acknowledged that parents came to classes with their own 'funds of literacy knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992), and they seemed to view family literacy as a 'socially situated practice'; on the other hand, it was understood that their teaching should correspond to the methods of teaching literacy found in schools. Literacy as taught in schools is rarely critically evaluated by parents or their children, and it is typically assumed to represent 'correct' practice. Every parent we interviewed accepted that the literacy practices taught in school – including, for example, an emphasis on synthetic phonics – belong to the 'right' way to approach the subject, and that this approach was essential if their children were to succeed.

We should also stress, however, that the main reason for parents joining these courses is that they positively wanted to learn about school literacies; they wished to be shown the 'right' or 'correct' way to teach their child at home. Indeed, the main incentive used by LA managers to recruit parents was that 'this course will help your child and improve their literacy'. Knowledge of school literacies enables parents to gain a better understanding of what counts as legitimate knowledge; when they are able to translate and reinforce these messages at home they are helping to develop their children's cultural capital (Lareau, 1987), and this is associated with higher levels of educational success. This process, therefore, may benefit parents, rather than leave them as disempowered, as has been suggested (e.g. Topping and Wolfendale, 1995).

We also observed numerous occasions on which parents were exercising agency, as in making decisions about which family literacy activities to implement and use at

home. The following extract (see Figure 5-2) is from fieldnotes taken during an observation of a family literacy class.

Figure 5-2

26.11.13

I go round the room chatting to the parents. They tell me that they do quite a few of the activities XX [name of tutor] gives them to work on with their children at home but they judge which ones are the most suitable. They only offer the activities to their children and they never force their children to take part. They don't have a particular time and it's as and when they can fit them in. It is not when the child comes home from school because they have their [school] homework then.

There was considerable variation between the pedagogic approaches observed in the parents-only, and joint and children-only sessions, but most of our observations confirmed the tutors' views as expressed in the questionnaires. Although we saw examples of some direct, 'transmissive' teaching, practice was on the whole characterised by being collaborative, interactive, practical and hands-on. This is illustrated in the following extract from a classroom observation (Figure 5-3):

Figure 5-3: An example of interactive teaching

07.11.13

XX [name of the tutor] gives out a list of words on small sheets of cardboard, about half the size of a playing card. He asks the parents to sort them out into three groups and gives them pins to stick on three wooden doors. The first door has a label that reads 'nouns', a second door has a label that reads 'adjectives' and the third label on the final door reads 'I don't know'. The parents work in small groups of two or three and have about 15 cards to sort out between them and pin up on one of the three doors using Blu Tack. The activity lasts about 5 minutes; there is lots of discussion over a few of the words and once all the cards are pinned up, XX asks the class to review the lists and comment on them

The classes we observed were well organised, and tutors were often seen writing the lesson's aims or objectives on the whiteboard or providing them on a handout. The tutors' survey reveals that the most common form of class organisation consisted of small group (often paired) work, followed by parents working individually. From tutors' estimates, it appears that in all, or in most of the sessions parents worked in pairs and/or small groups for more of the time than they worked individually, and most of this took the form of working on the same activity. Less time was spent working on different activities – together or alone – and this suggests that not many activities were differentiated by ability or interest. However, parents were

always encouraged to ask questions, and tutors would make suggestions as to how to adapt activities to suit parental and children's abilities.

Tutors explained concepts clearly, and there many examples of contemporary school teaching practices; for example, using body actions when teaching phonics, and explaining reading and spelling strategies. Tutors would make frequent references to definitions, functions and uses as these applied to basic parts of speech, and they would make frequent use of technical terms such as phonemes, digraphs, homophones and prefixes. Typically they would begin by asking an open question to the group – 'Does anyone know what a homophone is?' Once a definition had been proffered the tutor would ask parents to provide examples (e.g. *pear* and *pair*). The tutor would usually write these on a whiteboard and then often issue a worksheet for parents to complete, either individually or in pairs. These examples tended to characterise adult only sessions, but on occasions they would be carried into joint sessions, where, for example, parents and children would work together on a worksheet about writing an adjective alongside every letter of the alphabet. At other times, there would be no connection between the work undertaken by parents in the parents-only session and the joint parent-child session. Often, it appeared that joint sessions had a separate agenda, although this might be informed by what parents had been working on with their children at home during the intervening week.

One issue that emerged from two of the nine visits was that a small minority of tutors seemed to lack the skills expected of a trained KS1 teacher; they did not always have the authority required to effectively manage the children. It was noticeable on occasions that when children read their stories aloud many of the other children did not listen well. Sometimes the child would speak in a very quiet voice, and children often find it difficult to read out loud in front of a group of children *and* adults; but at the same time some tutors made little attempt to ask a child to speak up, or to emphasise the importance of being a good listener. The following extract (Figure 5-4) is taken from fieldnotes:

Figure 5-4: An example of poor listening

12.03.14

Each child read their story out to the group but the other children did not listen very well. Even though the children's voices were reasonably loud. Perhaps XX [the tutor] could have done more to organise the readings and get the children to listen better? The mums tried to help, and some admonished their children, but overall the listening was poor. I am not sure the tutor has the authority of a 'proper' teacher? I wonder how the children view her.

Tutors estimated that a third of class time in the parents-only and joint sessions was spent equally on activities connected to speaking and listening (33%), reading (34%)

and writing (28%). However, these three areas are not altogether discrete, and it is therefore often difficult for tutors to gauge the amount of time spent on each. It is, nevertheless, interesting to note the wide range of time estimated as given over to each area: speaking and listening (10%-60%), reading (20%-80%), writing (5%-40%)⁴⁷.

The teaching content on 22 of the courses was closely related to the KS1 school curriculum. Tutors reported that, on 14 courses, either all or most of their course work was linked to the school curriculum, while on eight courses tutors estimated that 'some' of their work was connected to the curriculum. Tutors on three courses reported that they did not base their own work on the school curriculum at all. However, this could be taken to mean only that there were no direct links to what the school was doing during the time of teaching, not that tutors' practices did not in general confirm to school based teaching of literacy (in respect, for example, of how reading and writing are taught to 5- to 7-year-olds).

The most commonly mentioned activities reported by tutors in the parents-only and joint sessions were connected to school literacies. In order of most frequently cited from the 27 courses, these involved: story-telling (sometimes with props such as puppets) (26); writing stories (24); modelling reading with children (e.g. showing parents how to comment on pictures or use predictive skills) (23); vocabulary-building games and rhymes (23); activities connected to synthetic phonics (21); playing games about different word types (e.g. nouns, verbs, connectives); (20); reading with 'Big' books (10); making a story box⁴⁸ (8); making books (3). (This list is not exhaustive).

The SoWs revealed that making and playing games, both in the classroom and in the HLE, was a common activity and an integral part of the majority of courses. Whilst parents only helped to *make* in the region of 2-4 games per course, many other games or activities were provided on worksheets. In a number of courses, there was an expectation that some activities would be completed at home, and brought in to share with the class in the following week; in most cases, however, all home activities were treated as voluntary, as for example, when one tutor reminds parents as they leave the class: 'don't force games on children; it is often a good idea to play them on the way to and from school, for example, I SPY' (Fieldnote extract – 07.11.14).

All 132 parents who filled in the survey at Time 2 reported that they made and/or played activities and games during the course. Parents thought the instructions given by tutors on how to make and play these games with their children were clear: 85% agreed that instructions were very clear and 15% said they were quite clear.

⁴⁷ There was another average figure calculated for 'other areas of literacy', which was 5% (range, 0%-25%). The figures do not add up to 100% because they represent averages from all the courses.

⁴⁸ A story box is a joint activity between parent and child where they make up, and often present, a story using props such as puppets. The activity encourages characterisation and improvisation.

However, only 45% of parents who attended the programmes reported that they played games a few times a week or every day, with 44% reporting that they played these games at home a few times during the course (see Figure 5-5).

Figure 5-5: Playing games/activities from the family literacy class outside class time

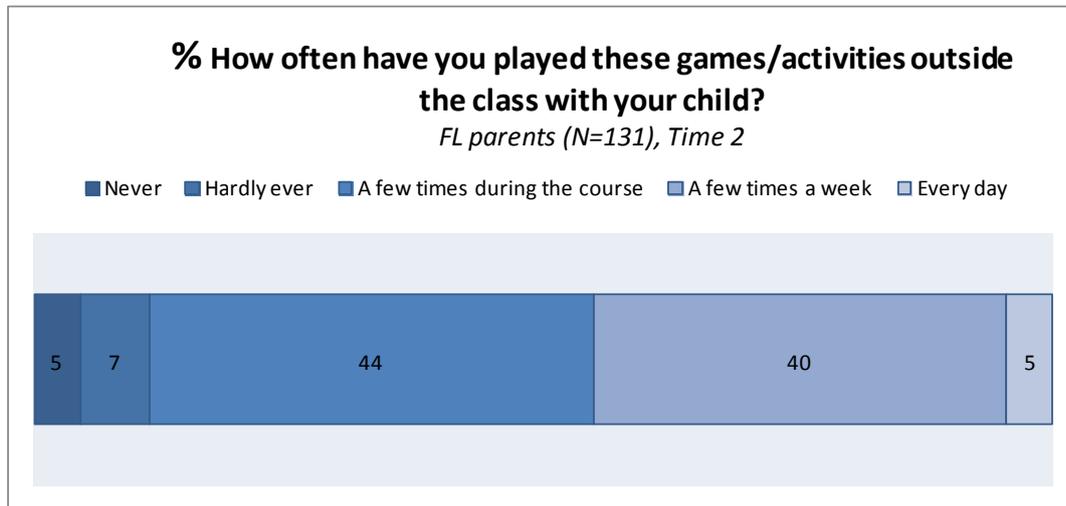
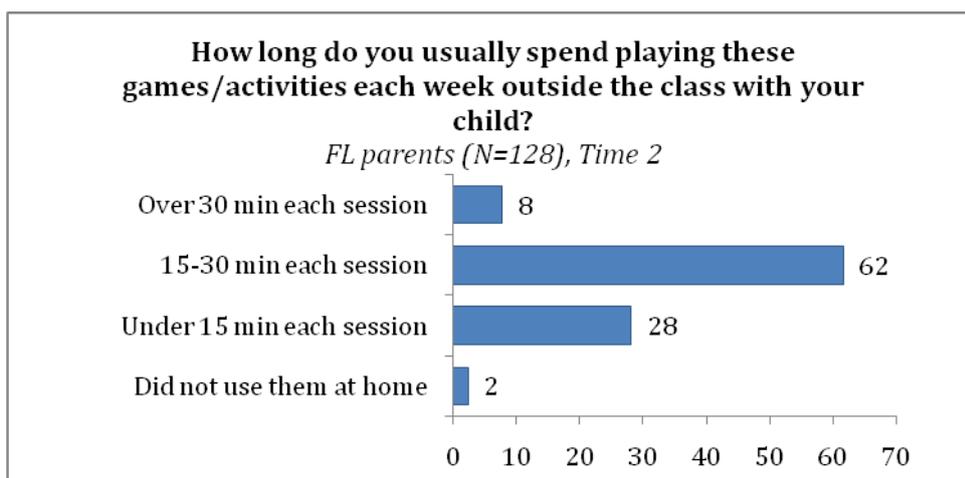


Figure 5-6 reveals that most parents (62%) spent around 10 to 30 minutes at each session playing the games that they had learned during their course. Most parents who were interviewed said that they used or played family literacy-made games and resources only at weekends, or in the holidays; for some interviewees this was explained by the time needed to help their children with regular school homework.

Figure 5-6: Length of playing sessions



Other activities involved strategies taught in class; in the case of spelling, for example, parents were asked to use the strategies they had learned when children brought spellings home as part of their homework. Sometimes, parents were given longer-term activities to complete with their child, such as making a book about their

child's interests or favourite places. Tutors reported giving parents homework every week on 17 of the courses, 'after most sessions' on five, and 'after some sessions' on two⁴⁹.

Visits were a popular feature of courses. These generally formed one whole session and, while six of the visits were to local libraries, there were also trips to museums, a supermarket and a BMX track. (This last was primarily an end-of-course celebration rather than an opportunity to engage in literacy related activity.). When visiting the supermarket, parents were given the task of working with their children to match items of food to each letter of the alphabet (a – apple, b – bread, and so on.). One course observed included a visit to a KS1 classroom to see how reading was being taught, and parents reported on how useful this observation was.

I really enjoyed that, that was nice actually, yeah, to see how the children, within all their different work stages, how they were all getting on. It was actually, it gave me a bit of a boost, not a boost, but it was encouraging as a parent I guess because also you saw in that class how they were working and getting on and the teacher, you know, working, interacting, and it was pretty important

In interviews parents spoke of how much they liked the trips, and one parent mentioned that the library visit had prompted her to re-join and become a frequent visitor.

Although the tutors' survey found little use of interactive and digital equipment, we observed the use of, and connections made to technology on a number of occasions. Many tutors were seen giving out links to websites that could be used to reinforce or stimulate further learning. In one setting, a tutor, and in another, a KS1 teacher, were observed videoing parents and their children performing stories to the rest of the group. In the extract below (Figure 5-7), a KS1 teacher provides strategies to help parents and children develop their learning, and the whole session is filmed:

⁴⁹Data from the tutors' questionnaire is only available on 25 courses. On one course of the 25 no data were returned on this question.

Figure 5-7: providing learning strategies and using new technology

04.07.14

The task set by XX [the KS1 teacher] is for the children and their parents to retell a story (The Three Billy Goats Gruff) using props such as finger puppets that they have made at home. There is a model theatre stage set up on a desk made out of cardboard, about 50 cm square, like a proscenium arch, and the parent and child crouch behind and act out the story. The parents and children are given 10 minutes to practise the story and XX and the family literacy tutor go round each pair offering advice. XX then gets the group together and gives lots of instructions and advice. For example, 'How might we begin the story?' 'What time connections can you use – e.g. 'once upon a time', 'later on'? He also talks about sound effects – e.g. 'splash'. There are many teaching points: 'What is the punctuation mark we would use if we were writing this word down?' He also says he wants to hear good describing words and asks for some examples; he emphasises the importance of different accents for each character, and the need for the rest of the group to be a good audience. Some of the children re-tell the story; some change it to varying degrees. While this is going on XX is filming them and plans to show this to the rest of the class at a later time.

During parents-only classes, parents were shown how to implement evidence-based strategies with their children at home, so that they should be able to continue to offer their children literacy experiences beyond their participation in the programme.

5.6 Enabling and constraining factors of successful provision

Tutors were asked to list the three most important factors that contributed to the 'success' of a family literacy course, along with the three greatest challenges that they faced. The most commonly mentioned factor for success was the commitment and attitude of the parents (19); followed by support from the school (16); and the inclusion of children working with their parents (13). Other responses included a good physical and material environment where the course is run (9) and resources to make games for parents to use at home (9).

The three greatest challenges were, in order of frequency: intermittent parental attendance (13), the range of parents' literacy skills within the same group (7); and poor links with the host school (6). Further elements included a poor physical and material environment (6); and a lack of course time to cover enough of the curriculum/SoW (5). Only three of these five features were the opposite of the five successful features listed above: parental commitment, relations with the school and the quality of the setting.

5.7 Parents' motivations and evaluations of the courses

The four most frequently mentioned reasons why parents wanted to join a family literacy class were related to school and school literacies (see Table 5-1), and were very similar to the motivations that parents reported in the previous NRDC evaluation. 82% of parents wanted to learn how to help their child with their homework, 79% wished to be involved in their child's school life and education, and another 79% expected and wanted to learn how the school was teaching their child to read and write. Finally, 68% wanted to increase their own confidence in helping their child with schoolwork. These reasons accord with the concept of *parent school alignment*, discussed in See and Gorard (2015), and which, these authors maintain, is likely to have positive effects on children's behaviours and outcomes.

The responses of parents during interviews⁵⁰ suggested that they usually had a whole series of reasons for taking part in classes:

I know how important it is, you know, getting your children to sort of be interested in reading, and create a love of books, and just enhance really my daughter's learning really, and just to see if there are other ways I can encourage that at home as a parent, hoping, you know, that the course will give me a few ideas really.

Most interviewees reported that they attended the course purely for the benefit of their child. Other reasons, reported by fewer than half of the parents in the sample, were more closely related to parental development and progression. Slightly fewer than half (45%) wanted to increase confidence in their own literacy skills, 32% reported that they wanted to improve their reading, and 30% their writing skills.

It is not always easy to disentangle the reasons given for participation: parents often reported that they attended their course in order to improve their own English, but this, in turn, was important to them primarily because they were then better placed to help their child, and this is related to their ability to help their children with school homework.

It is interesting to note that only about one quarter (24%) of parents expected or wished to gain a literacy qualification. Recalling the policy context and changes in the nature of provision, most family literacy programmes in this study did not provide opportunities for parents to gain qualifications; this is discussed in Chapter 2.

⁵⁰Twenty-one of 24 of the parents were asked at Time 1 about their initial motivations for enrolling on the course.

Table 5-1: Why did you join this family literacy class? (multiple response question, % of cases adds to more than 100%)

	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
To learn how to help my child with his/her homework.	141	18.4%	81.5%
To be more involved in my child's school life and education.	137	17.9%	79.2%
To learn how the school teaches my child to read and write.	136	17.7%	78.6%
To increase my confidence in helping my child with his/her schoolwork.	117	15.3%	67.6%
To increase my confidence in my own literacy skills.	78	10.2%	45.1%
To improve my own reading.	56	7.3%	32.4%
To improve my own writing.	52	6.8%	30.1%
To gain literacy qualifications.	41	5.3%	23.7%
Other	9	1.2%	5.2%
TOTAL	767	100.0%	

The age of parents was related to their motivation to join a programme (see Table A6.2 in Appendix 6). A higher proportion of older parents wanted to improve their confidence, and their writing and reading skills, whilst younger parents were more likely to report gaining literacy qualifications as one of their motivations to join the course. Older parents were also more likely to report wanting to be more involved in their children's school life and education.

A higher proportion of parents who spoke a language other than English with their children at home, as compared with those who reported speaking only or mainly English at home, reported increasing their own confidence, skills and gaining qualifications as their main motivations for enrolling (see Table A6.4 in Appendix 6).

Similarly, parents with overseas, low or no qualifications were more likely to see their course as a means of increasing their own confidence and skills, while parents with higher qualifications were more likely to be motivated by the chance to become more involved with their child's education (see Table A6.3 in Appendix 6).

Some writers (McGivney, 1996; Eccles et al., 1997; Schunk and Pintrich, 2002) attempt to categorise motivation as extrinsic or intrinsic. The former has a significant instrumental aspect, and is related to the expectation of subsequent reward; the latter includes the expected personal gratification from engagement in activity arising from one's own interest. This is not always a clear distinction: someone can be motivated by the enjoyment of an activity which they also believe will lead to securing a long-term goal. However, whilst almost all parents liked attending their classes, this was not their primary motivation for enrolling; their principal motivation was extrinsic, with an expectation of future benefit.

When parents were asked at Time 1 about their expectations of the course, only four supposed that it was going to be about learning how the school teaches literacy in order that they could better support their child at home. Although they thought the course was probably 'something to do' with reading 9 of the 16 who talked about their expectations reported that they did not 'really know what to expect':

When I first went I thought it was a better reading activity, you know, how to improve your kids' reading, which it is, but I thought in particular like focus more on the kids, not as much on the parents, I thought the kids were going to be with us for the whole session and we were going to sit there and help them. You know when sometimes when your child is good in English and they say they are good but just the reading is below average, I was thinking it was something like that, but it wasn't.

This suggests that there is scope for some family literacy courses to promote themselves more effectively and to provide prospective parents with more detailed information about the aims and benefits of participation.

Almost all 24 parents who were interviewed during the first few weeks of their courses reported that they were enjoying them, and the great majority spoke of them as 'excellent' or 'fantastic'. There were very few aspects that parents reported not liking: two complained about the paperwork and the amount of form filling, one said that she would not have signed up if she had known that she was going to be asked to engage in activities at home, and another protested that the timing of the children's session for the hour after the school day had finished left her child tired and irritable.

When the 23 parents (out of a total of 28) were asked for their overall evaluation at the end of the course, almost all used repeated what they had said at Time 1 - 'really good', 'brilliant' or 'excellent' - and spoke of how much they and their children had enjoyed it:

I think it went fantastic. I know from feedback from everyone else they thoroughly enjoyed it. The kids were sad that it finished because they really enjoyed it, they enjoyed the challenges that we were set, like the little homework topics that we did at home and they enjoyed coming into class and the activities we did with like the photograph, going around with the camera and taking photographs and then describing everything that we had in the photo, yeah, it was really good. We all enjoyed it anyway.

A further three parents rated the course as 'good' and two as 'OK'. However, one of these two parents was taking the course for a second time.

Twenty of the parents were asked directly if they would recommend the course to another parent: 18 replied that they would, and 2 that they would not. 22 parents

were asked if they would like to take another course, either family literacy or some other course, and all 22 gave an affirmative response.

Summary

The landscape of family literacy provision has changed markedly since NRDC carried out its previous evaluation in 2007-09; today, in 2015, provision is more fragmented. The most common model is a parents-only session followed by a joint parent-children session; there is relatively little discrete children's provision. The teaching content of courses is closely related to the KS1 school curriculum, and learning about strategies for teaching reading is a key component of almost every course. Teaching is often collaborative, interactive, practical and hands-on, and parents worked in pairs or small groups for more of the time than they worked individually. The success of programmes depends on having a good understanding of parental motivation: we found that parents' principal motivation for enrolling was to learn more about school literacies in order that they could give their children more effective support at home.

In the following chapter we report on the impact of family literacy programmes on children's reading and writing.

6. Reading and writing skills of children

This chapter addresses the first of our research questions, on the impact of family literacy programmes on children's progress in reading and writing. We also consider the characteristics of provision which may have a significant impact on reading attainment. We conclude by looking at parental perceptions of the effect of provision on their own, and their children's, literacy levels.

6.1 Children's reading

As children's participation in provision was entirely voluntary it was not possible randomly to assign them to groups; therefore, in order to reduce selection bias we used a propensity score matching technique. The approach allowed us to make quasi-experimental comparisons between intervention and control groups that display a similar likelihood of participating in the programmes, based on their observed characteristics.

We then examined which of the main characteristics of pupils were related to baseline reading scores and participation in family literacy programmes. Finally, drawing on knowledge of previous related analyses, and a preliminary analysis of our own data, we selected the variables to include into propensity score matching.

Depending on the year group of children in the family class (whether Y1, Y2 or both year groups), we aimed to test all the other Y1 and Y2 children on the school registers at two time points⁵¹ (see Chapter 3). As Table 6-1 illustrates, the total number of reading tests available for matching was less than the original total owing to attrition and the quality of test data.

As Table 6-1 shows, there were some differences in the baseline reading scores of different subsets of pupils. Boys, those who were eligible for FSM, and those with SEN (Special Educational Needs) had lower scores. There were no differences based on children's ethnicity or main language spoken at home.

⁵¹In two of the larger schools we elected not to assess every class if it contained two or fewer children from the family literacy group.

Table 6-1: Baseline reading scores by socio-demographic characteristics

	Mean value	Standard Deviation
GENDER		
Female	102.6	14.3
Male	99.1	14.7
EAL⁵²		
Yes	100.9	14.8
No	100.8	14.3
ETHNICITY		
White	100.9	14.9
Asian	100.5	14.7
Black	102.2	13.1
Mixed	100.7	13.6
Other	101.5	12.8
SEN		
No	102.5	14.1
School Action	90.5	13.4
School Action Plus	93.7	16.1
Statement	87.0	5.9
FSM		
Yes	97.2	14.1
No	102.0	14.5

We also looked at the characteristics of pupils that might be related to their participation in family literacy programmes. As Table 6-2 shows, children who were involved in these programmes were more likely to be boys, have an Asian ethnicity, be defined as SEN, and have lower scores from the EYFS profiles. It is interesting that there was no effect of FSM or EAL status. This might be explained by the fact that the programmes in our sample (see Chapter 4) were more likely to have a higher proportion of both EAL and FSM pupils and, as with the differences at school level, these two characteristics were not related to individuals' participation.

To calculate propensity scores we used children's gender, ethnicity, EAL, SEN and FSM status, Year Group and EYFS profile scores in literacy, as well as a baseline reading score. We also used the school for the propensity score matching to increase the number of cases matched within schools, and to take account of school effects. We used the National Pupil Database (NPD) to gain information on the covariates.

⁵²EAL stands for English as an Additional Language.

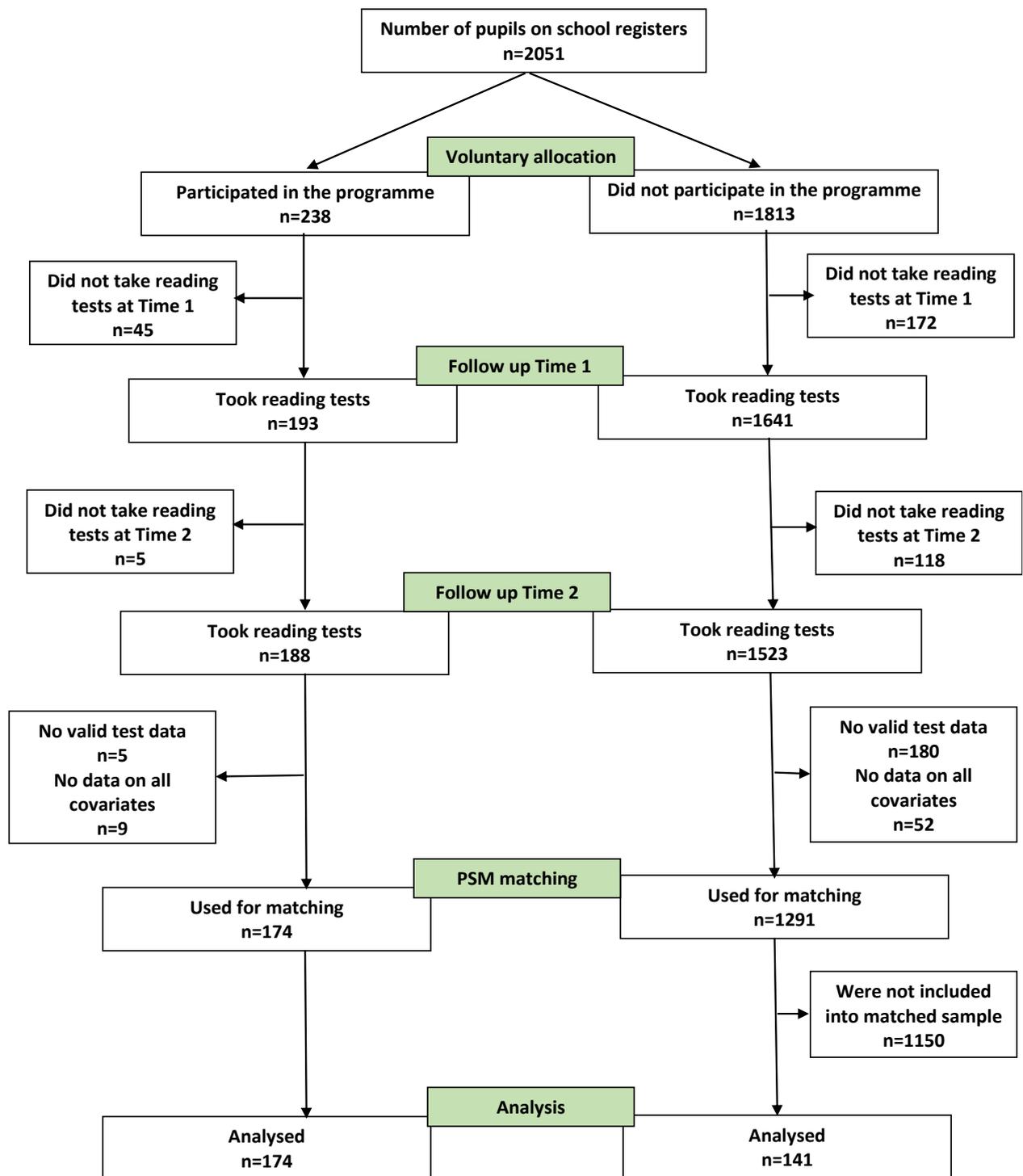
Table 6-2: Participation in FL programmes by characteristics of the participants

	Intervention		Control	
	N	%	N	%
GENDER				
Female	80	46	676	52
Male	94	54	615	48
EAL				
Yes	100	58	725	56
No	74	42	566	44
ETHNICITY				
White	91	53	688	53
Asian	72	43	392	31
Black	4	2	91	7
Mixed	2	1	71	6
Other	2	1	45	3
SEN				
No	141	82	1115	87
School Action	18	11	105	8
School Action Plus	13	7	51	4
Statement	-	-	4	1
FSM				
No	131	75	988	77
Yes	43	25	303	23
YEAR GROUP				
Year 1	94	54	645	50
Year 2	80	46	646	50
FOUNDATION STAGE PROFILE IN LITERACY*				
	M	SD	M	SD
	-0.02	0.97	0.05	0.97

**We used z-scores because of the changes in the scoring of the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) in 2012. As a result of these changes we had two groups of pupils who had different FSP score ranges.*

For our analysis we had to select, amongst those children for whom we had valid reading tests (N=1514) all but only those who provided complete data on all the covariates we used to predict their propensity score (N=1465). We arrived at a figure of 174 children making up the intervention group, to be matched to a pool of 1291 children who had not taken part in family literacy programmes. The high number of non-participants satisfies the PSM requirements, which employs a ‘data-hungry’ approach (Bryson et al., 2002). We used STATA to undertake the matching and estimate the ATT (average treatment effect on treated). The match was undertaken using nearest-neighbour matching with replacement, and it produced 141 matches for 174 participants.

Figure 6-1: Flow chart of children’s progress through the phases of the study



Reading test results

The results in Table 6-3 (second row) display the estimated effect from unmatched difference-in-difference analysis; this analysis did not provide any evidence of an effect on the family literacy programmes. The third row summarises the results of the matched sample comparison and suggests that the programmes had a positive effect on children’s reading scores. Although it is important to note that statistical significance is at the 8% level, this is a substantial finding - the analysis was robust, and allowed us to recreate an experimental design by diminishing selection bias.

Table 6-3: Results of propensity score matching and difference in difference analysis

	Intervention	Control	Difference	S.E.	t-stat	p-value
Unmatched	4.21	4.28	-0.07	0.85	-0.08	n.s.
Matched ATT	4.21	1.83	2.38	1.31	1.82	<0.08

The figure in the bottom column of Table 6-4, giving the effect size of the intervention, is notable: our analytical approach, combining propensity score matching with difference-in-difference analysis, has produced a very conservative estimate; but even so, the effect size of 0.17 is comparable to the 0.3 and 0.5 effect sizes obtained from other evaluations of family literacy (Nye et al., 2006; Erion, 2006; Sénéchal and Young, 2008; Mol et al., 2008; Manz et al., 2010). The effect size found here is also directly comparable with the effect size of 0.18 from the most recent meta-analysis of family literacy interventions produced by van Steensel et al. (2011).

Table 6-4: Reading scores: effect size

	Intervention		Control	
	average	s.d.	average	s.d.
Pre	103.4	14.7	104.8	14.4
Post	107.6	14.3	106.7	13.2
Gain	4.2	11.5	1.8	10.1
Effect size (Cohen’s d) ⁵³	0.17			

As Table 6-5 illustrates the impact of family literacy programmes is more pronounced among those pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals and boys. However, as the same table demonstrates boys and those eligible for FSM also have faster improvement rates in the control group. We also have to remind that both of those groups had lower reading scores at the baseline that influences their rates of improvement. Of course, this needs further exploration using greater sample sizes.

⁵³ See Appendix 9 for more information

Table 6-5: Characteristics of children and change in their reading scores, weighted data after PSM (those with p-values below 0.05 based on t test results are in bold)

	Intervention group				Control group			
	M	SD	N	Effect size	M	SD	N	Effect size
English as an Additional Language								
Yes	5.15	13.71	100	0.38	1.85	10.63	100	0.17
No	3.49	9.46	74	0.37	1.86	9.89	74	0.19
Eligibility for Free School Meals								
Yes	6.79	12.41	43	0.55	3.83	11.72	40	0.33
No	3.34	11.02	131	0.30	1.27	9.64	134	0.13
Special Educational Needs								
Yes	6.65	14.57	31	0.46	1.7	9.15	30	0.19
No	3.66	10.64	143	0.34	1.89	10.41	144	0.18
Gender								
Boys	5.91	11.12	93	0.53	2.51	9.31	93	0.27
Girls	2.24	11.38	81	0.20	1.10	11.10	81	0.10

We carried out a series of bivariate analyses of various characteristics of the programmes and families; only a few appeared to be significant. Of interest, the provision of a crèche, liaisons between a tutor and KS1 teacher/s, and linking the work to the school curriculum were *not* related to any positive changes in pupils' reading scores. Of the four HLE dimensions, the only increase in parental literacy practices that appeared to have a significantly positive impact on children's gain in reading scores, related to parents reading of books, newspapers, magazines and/or digital texts.

We found evidence of the effects of the characteristics of family literacy provision (summarised in Table 6-6). Children showed a greater increase in reading scores when tutors had specific training in family literacy. Reading with 'Big' books and making story boxes⁵⁴ was also particularly successful strategies that led to greater gains. There were larger positive outcomes in children's reading when the reading process was modelled between an adult and children during classes (which parents could observe and imitate at home); when parents were promoted as role models and encouraged to have greater involvement in their children's learning; and when they were encouraged to focus on their own learning experiences. We suggest that, when parents begin to model reading practices and behaviours, and they become literacy role models, they are also developing levels of social capital, as discussed in Chapter 2.

⁵⁴A 'Big' book is a large book with over-sized text that is designed to be read with a group of people. A story box is a joint activity between parent and child where they make up, and often present, a story using props such as puppets. The activity encourages characterisation and improvisation.

Table 6-6: Characteristics of provision and change in reading scores of children (only those with *p*-values below 0.05 are included)

	M	SD	Effect size
FL tutor has specific training in teaching FL			
Yes	6.5	12.3	0.53
No	3.7	11.4	0.32
Reading with "Big" books			
Yes	7.2	13.5	0.53
No	3.0	10.2	0.29
Making a story box			
Yes	7.0	10.6	0.66
No	3.1	12.2	0.25
Modelling reading with children			
Yes	5.1	11.8	0.43
No	0.4	10.5	0.04
Particular link about learning 'school literacies'			
Yes	1.57	11.2	0.14
No	7.39	10.7	0.69
Importance of parents as role models			
Yes	8.6	12.4	0.69
No	3.4	11.0	0.31
Focusing on parents' own learning experiences			
Yes	9.1	11.4	0.80
No	3.3	11.1	0.30
Importance of parental involvement in learning			
Yes	8.6	12.4	0.69
No	3.4	11.0	0.31

6.2 Children's writing

We used the same matched sample for the analysis of the writing tests. However, the overall numbers in both intervention and control groups were smaller (212 overall) owing to missing and invalid writing tests. The results are presented in Table 6-7. The score range was from 1 to 9. Here, as we can see, the difference between changes in writing test scores between the intervention and control groups indicates some minimal positive effect (effect size [Cohen's *d*] = 0.07) of the programmes, but the effect remains statistically non-significant.

It is important to mention that the writing test itself did not provide a wide range of scores, and it was therefore difficult to differentiate between small developmental steps that might only be apparent *between* the differing levels observed. In addition, there was a so called 'ceiling effect', whereby many children in both groups started at a relatively high level and were therefore unable to show much progression in their writing scores. 18% of pupils had already scored a maximum number of marks at Time 1.

Table 6-7: Results of the writing tests: Difference-in-difference analysis using propensity score matched samples

	Intervention		Control	
	M	SD	M	SD
Pre	7.0	1.6	7.1	1.7
Post	7.6	1.5	7.6	1.5
	0.6	1.4	0.5	0.9
	Difference	S.E.	t-stat	p-value
Difference in difference	0.1	0.2	0.64	0.52

6.3 Parents' perceptions of their own and their children's literacy progress

The finding that children on family literacy courses made more progress in their reading than children who were not on one of the programmes was supported by parents' reports in interviews and the questionnaire: 74% indicated that they thought their children had made gains in reading as a result of participating in activities and games offered during the course and also used outside class time. Fewer parents noticed changes in writing and speaking: 56% of parents thought that their children's writing had also improved through playing these games, and 40% also thought the same about the speaking abilities of their children.

Twenty-five parents in their interviews spoke about improvements they had noticed in their child's literacy since the beginning of the course, although three thought it was difficult to say that this was the result of the course itself. 24 of 25 interviewed parents stated that there were changes in their child's attainment (moving up levels in reading scheme categories), and some mentioned seeing evidence of more positive attitudes and higher levels of confidence.

Parent: I'm very, very, well pleased with his reading, because as I said this year he's gone up two levels, so it was a surprise. Last year he stayed on one level for the whole year.

Researcher: OK, and he's already gone up two levels this term then.

Parent: Yeah.

Researcher: That's very good. So are you spending more time reading with him at home now?

Parent: Oh yeah, now it's thirty-two pages, he used to read sixteen, gone up to twenty-four, now thirty-two pages, so I'll read a book with him every day, not just reading but also discussing the story as well.

Here again, parents asserted in interviews that most of their children's progress appeared to have been in reading (12), compared to three in writing, but nine parents stated that they had seen developments in both areas.

Moreover, parents reported literacy gains not only for their children, but also in their own skills. Slightly fewer than half of parents thought that their own reading (44%) and writing skills (42%) had also developed through engagement in the games and activities, and 53% said that they now had greater confidence in their literacy skills as a result of attending the family literacy course.

It is worth highlighting the fact that 15 out of the 19 parents who commented on their own literacy skills also thought that these had improved as a result of the course. In the main this was a case of their skills being 'refreshed', but parents also spoke about how they had become more interested in books and were now reading more frequently. One parent remarked that she was now able to comprehend material that she had not understood when she was at school:

When we went into her class and found out about that reading stuff, I actually understood it then for the first time, when I were younger on it I didn't get it whatsoever.

Summary

We have presented evidence to show that family literacy programmes have a positive effect on the reading attainment of children. Children who attend family literacy courses experience greater progress in reading compared to their schoolmates who do not attend. This is, perhaps, the single most important finding of the study: family literacy programmes help to improve children's reading.

However, we did not find evidence that attendance on programmes had any impact on children's writing.

Children showed a greater increase in reading scores when tutors had had training in family literacy. There were larger positive outcomes in children's reading when the reading process was modelled between an adult and children during classes, when parents were promoted as role models and encouraged to have greater involvement in their children's learning, and when they were encouraged to focus on their own learning experiences. Reading with 'Big' books and making story boxes also led to greater gains.

Parents reported gains both in their children's literacy development and in their own literacy skills, and over half stated that they now had greater confidence in their overall literacy skills as a result of attending a course.

In the next Chapter we consider the effect of family literacy provision on parents' literacy behaviours and their attitudes.

7. Parents' literacy behaviours and attitudes

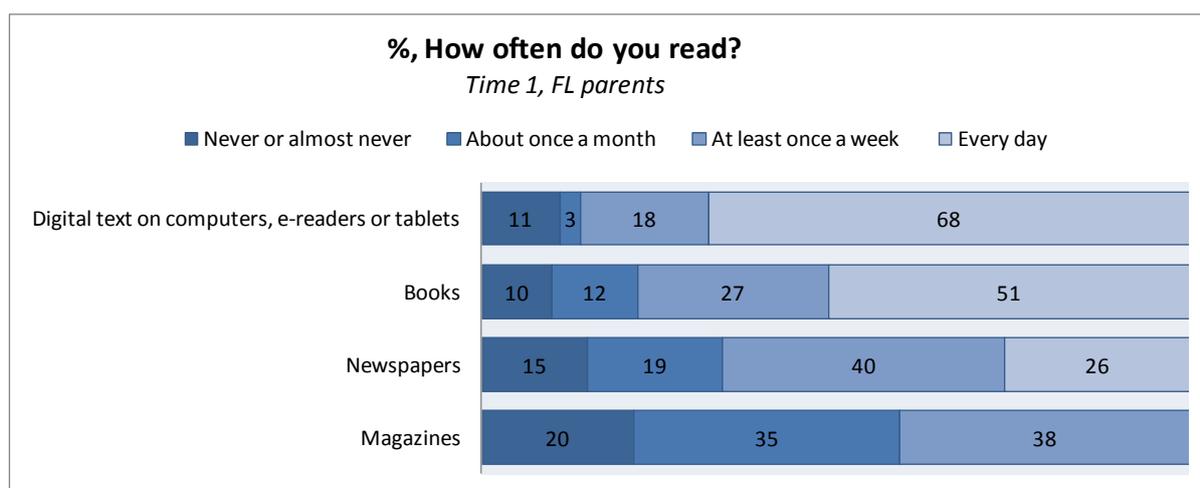
Chapter 7 addresses our second research question: to what extent does parental participation in family literacy programmes change family literacy practices, attitudes and beliefs outside the classroom? We consider parents' behaviours and attitudes towards reading (as belonging to Dimension 2 of the HLE), and the extent to which participation in family literacy programmes is associated with any changes in them.

7.1 Parents' reading habits and their attitudes towards reading

As a part of our analysis of the HLE we looked at parents' own habits, including their behaviours and attitudes with regard to literacy. Figure 7-1 summarises parents' reading habits. Most parents read digital texts on their computers, e-readers or tablets everyday (68%), or at least once a week (18%). Over half of parents who attended family literacy programmes also read books every day (51%), or at least once a week (27%). Furthermore, over a quarter (26%) of parents reported reading newspapers every day, and 40% reading them at least once a week. The least frequently read materials were magazines; no parent read them every day, although 38% reported reading them at least once a week⁵⁵.

Whilst these habits reflect parents' choices, they are also connected to the availability of reading materials, with digital texts often being more readily accessible than magazines and newspapers. It is also important to note that digital texts can include digitalised books, newspapers and magazines.

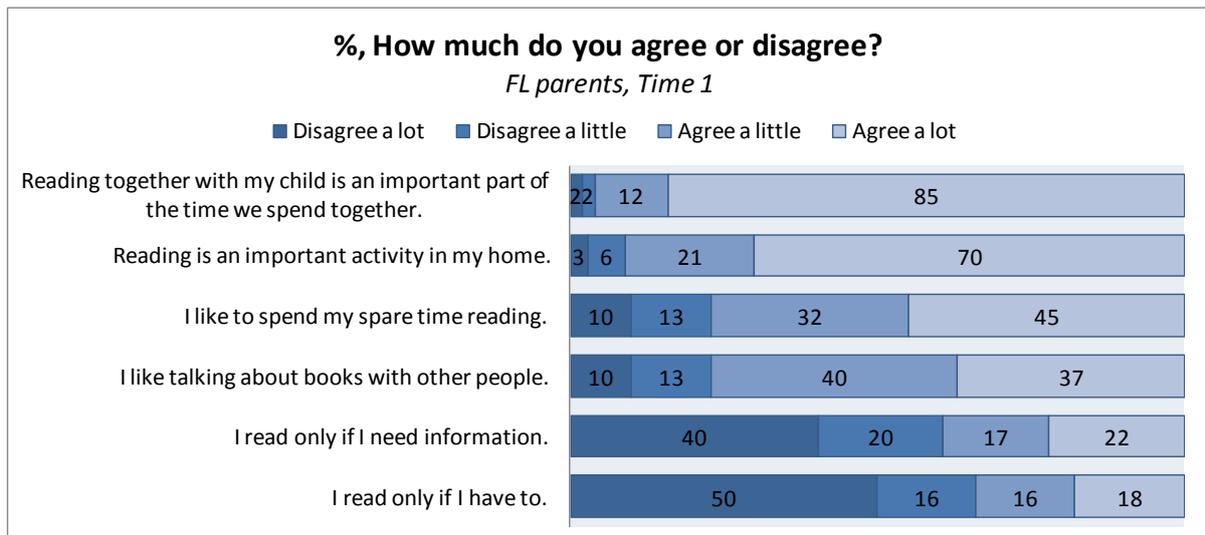
Figure 7-1: Parents' own reading habits



⁵⁵ Most magazines come out once a week or less often than that.

Most parents agreed that reading is an important activity (see Figure 7-2) in their home (91%), and even more so when it came to reading with their children (97%). Over three-quarters (77%) of parents reported that they liked to spend time reading, and the same percentage talked about the books they read with other people. This said, 39% agreed that they only read when they needed information, and 34% only read when they had to.

Figure 7-2: Parental attitudes towards reading



With reference to the sum of parental reading habits and attitudes towards reading we created a scale representing parents' own literacy habits. Possible scores on the parental literacy habits scale range from 0 to 30. The parents who attended the family literacy programme scored on average 20 points on this scale (standard deviation = 5). Therefore, although parents on average read quite frequently, and believed that reading was important, and also enjoyed it, there was still significant variation between their overall orientations.

Parents with higher qualifications ($F(5,187) = 6.43, p < 0.001$), those who possessed more books in general ($F(4,193) = 20.33, p < 0.001$), and more children's books in particular ($F(4,192) = 11.86, p < 0.001$), those who spoke English at home ($F(1,200) = 6.97, p = 0.01$), and those who read different types of materials more often, tended to have more positive attitudes towards reading in general. (As demonstrated by an ANOVA analysis.)

7.2 Changes between Time 1 and Time 2

A paired-sample t-test was conducted to compare parents' reading habits and attitudes before and after attending the family literacy course. The combined scores were significantly higher after the courses ($M=21.3, SD=3.9$) than before them ($M=20.5, SD=4.6$); $t(117) = -2.56, p=0.012$.

When we looked at reading 'practices' and 'attitudes' dimensions separately, we found that parents experienced a greater and statistically significant change in their attitudes towards literacy as a result of the course ($t(117) = 1.57, p = 0.12$), but not in their behaviours ($t(117) = 2.46, p = 0.02$). This is in line with existing research, which shows that behaviours typically take longer to change than attitudes (Reder and Bynner, 2008; Reder, 2013).

It is notable that the greatest positive change was experienced by parents who had relatively few books in their households ($F(4,113) = 5.2, p < 0.001$); those who had a relatively large number of books recorded only minor, if any, changes in their literacy habits at the end of courses. At the same time we should observe that these two groups had differences in baseline scores before the courses. Those who had more books in their homes had higher scores, and therefore had less room for upward change. However, we found no differences in scores based on educational qualifications, main home language or previous attendance on family learning programmes. This confirms evidence of a law of diminishing returns from Evans et al. (2014): using data from OECD's PISA study to analyse data from 200,144 cases in 42 countries, suggesting that an additional book for a bookless family will have a much larger impact than (say) the 102nd or 202nd book for a household in which 'existing "stocks" of skill and information are already large' (Evans et al., 2014: 5).

It is also worth recording that, when we linked our data to the tutor questionnaires and SoWs, there was an indication ($F(2, 96) = 2.6, p = 0.08$) that, when tutors asked parents to work at home with their children on the activities they had created or learned about in class, these parents showed a slightly higher positive change in their own habits and attitudes towards literacy. Additionally, on courses where parents were asked to focus on their own learning experiences ($F(1,108) = 5.5, p = 0.02$) and/or on their own interests ($F(1,108) = 8.8, p < 0.001$) changes in their literacy habits attitudes were also greater than otherwise.

Summary

Although parents on average read relatively frequently, believing that reading is important and also enjoying it, there was a significant variation in their general orientation towards reading.

Parents' attitudes towards reading showed significant improvements between the start and end of courses, and family literacy programmes that utilised the learning experiences and interests of parents were associated with greater positive changes in parents' literacy attitudes.

However, there was no confirmation of any changes in parents' reading behaviours, in line with existing research which suggests that it takes a lot longer to change behaviours than it does to change attitudes. The greatest positive change was experienced by parents who had relatively few books in their households, suggesting

that there is significant scope for the impact of family literacy programmes on families in which the presence of books is relatively small.

In the next chapter we turn to the third dimension of the HLE: parents' beliefs and understandings.

8. Parents' literacy beliefs and understandings

This chapter looks at the beliefs parents hold about the schools' role in the development of their children's literacy, and their understanding of how literacy is taught at school - the third dimension of the HLE, as we have conceived this. Here we consider our third research question, and look at how parents translate and implement what they learn from family literacy programmes into the home setting.

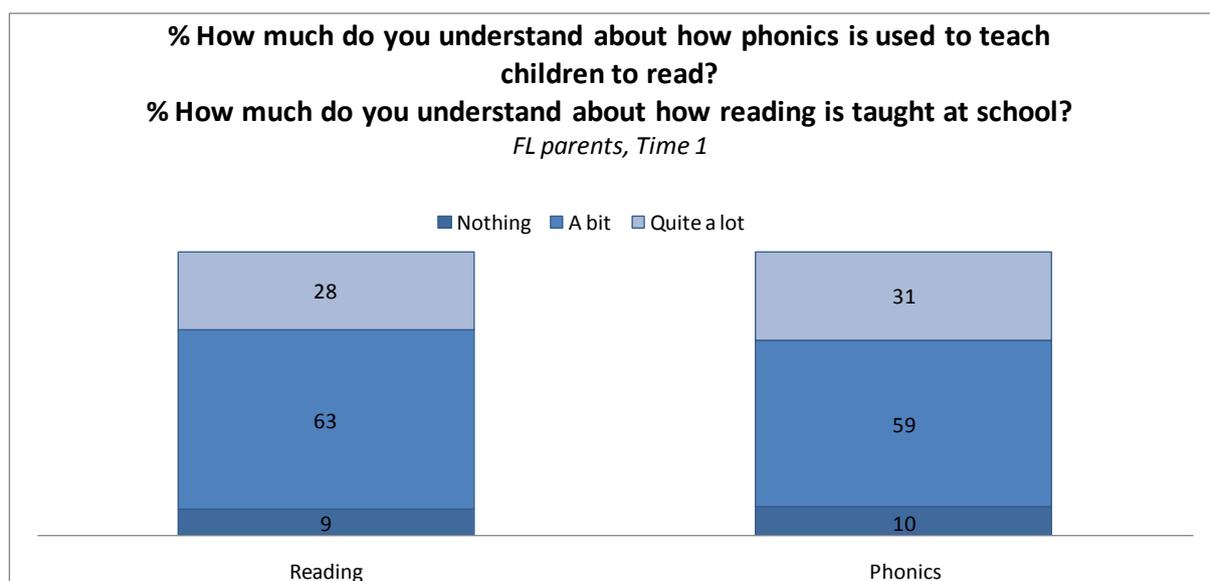
8.1 Beliefs about school and an understanding of how school literacies are taught

Since so many parents mentioned their desire to understand more about schoolwork and school literacies, offering this as the main reason for joining the programme, it is important to relate this to their beliefs and attitudes about school. All but three parents stated that they believed that reading and writing homework are important or very important for their child's learning. Evidence from interviews suggests that, on average, children at the age of 5 or 6 have homework between two and four times a week, lasting a total of between one and two hours per week. Homework mainly consisted of English and maths, and the English or literacy component generally involved reading and spellings, activities clearly prioritised by schools. In line with our quantitative data, almost all parents said they accepted homework as part of the school routine; they saw it as a way of helping with their child's education and improving achievement, and almost all of them thought that the amount of time was about right. However, as mentioned previously, family literacy activities took second place to homework, and the main time given over to the former was usually during the weekend or a holiday.

A relatively small proportion of parents (68%) felt confident, or very confident, at Time 1 about helping their child with the work they brought home from school. Nevertheless, more than half of parents said that they understood 'a bit' of how reading is taught at school (63%) and how phonics is used to teach children to read (59%). Approximately one third of parents understood 'quite a lot' about these two processes, and only about 10% of parents reported understanding nothing about them (see Figure 8-1).

By the end of the course 82% of parents said that it had helped them learn how to support their child better with their homework, and 78% said it had given them more confidence to help their child with their schoolwork.

Figure 8-1: Understanding of school literacy processes



In keeping with evidence from quantitative analysis, a comparable proportion of parents interviewed at Time 1 spoke about their understanding of how the school teaches reading and writing, and reported that they already had a good understanding and were familiar with the teaching approaches used. Some of this was put down to having either attended a previous family course, or worked in the school (e.g. helping out in classrooms) or having elder children, and/or the school being particularly good at communicating with parents about the literacy approaches used - offering workshops or inviting parents into the school to see how literacy was being taught.

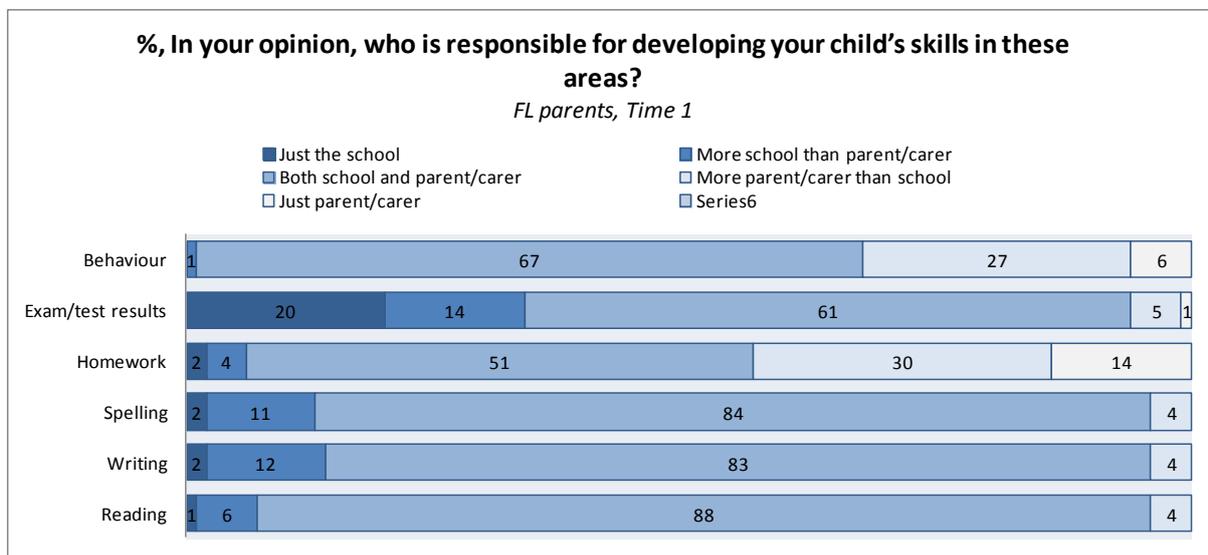
Questionnaire data suggest that those parents who had previously attended a family literacy course thought that they had better knowledge of how reading is taught at school (including knowledge of phonics) at the beginning of their current course. 41% of those who had previously attended a programme, against 23% who had not, stated that they knew 'a lot' about how reading is taught at school. Similarly, 59% of parents who had experienced family literacy provision, compared to 22% who did not, reported that they knew a lot about how phonics is used in teaching children to read.

The questionnaire also included questions about the role of parents and the school in the development of reading and writing, and about such related subjects as homework, exams and children's behaviour (see Figure 8-2). Most parents thought that the responsibility for general literacy development is shared between school and themselves. However, there was some variation in the answers relating to other subjects. Almost one third of parents (34%) thought that exam and test results were the sole responsibility of the school, or, at least, more the schools' responsibility than their own; almost half of parents (44%) agreed that they had a greater responsibility

for homework than the school, and a third (33%) had similar feelings about children’s behaviour.

There were significant differences between writing, reading and spelling. Although in general terms most parents agreed that the responsibility for these three elements of literacy can be divided equally between school and parent, more parents thought that schools should have greater responsibility for writing (14%) and spelling (13%), whilst only 7% of parents reported the same about reading, which was seen as properly subject to a much more equal partnership. (Van Steensel (2006) reports that the Dutch teachers in his study were very critical of any writing instruction being carried out by parents; in their view these skills were best left to the school.)

Figure 8-2: Schools’ and parents’ responsibilities for developing children’s skills



In this study we have combined two strands from the HLE – ‘beliefs’ and ‘understandings’ - into one: ‘beliefs’ refers to the beliefs of parents about the role they and the school should play in their children’s literacy development; ‘understandings’ refers to their understanding of school literacy processes. These are represented in a scale consisting of 10 items⁵⁶. Scores range from 0 to 40: the higher the score, the more confident and knowledgeable the parent, and the stronger their belief in their role in their children’s literacy development.

At Time 1 the literacy beliefs and understandings of parents ranged from 10 to 30, with a mean of 21 points and standard deviation of 3. Based on ANOVA analysis, we found statistically significant differences between groups of parents. Parents attending family literacy programmes who had higher educational qualifications ($F(5,187) = 4.52, p < 0.001$), more books in general ($F(4,193) = 2.56, p = 0.04$) and more children’s books ($F(4,192) = 3.39, p = 0.01$) in their homes, and those who

⁵⁶See more details on items in Section 3.4.

spoke English with children at home ($F(1,200) = 6.29, p = 0.01$) scored higher on the beliefs and understandings scale. These parents were confident and more knowledgeable about school literacies, and how they were taught, and perceived themselves as playing a more active role in the literacy development of their children.

8.2 Changes between Time 1 and Time 2

We wanted to explore whether parents' beliefs and understandings changed after attending a family literacy programme. A paired-sample t-test was conducted to compare the beliefs of parents before and after the courses. Scores were significantly higher after the course ($M=22.6, SD=3.0$) compared with scores achieved before the course had begun ($M=21.6, SD=3.7$); $t(117) = 3.34, p=0.001$.

Parents who spoke English at home experienced larger positive changes in their beliefs and understandings ($F(1,116) = 5.5, p = 0.02$). However, there were no differences based on educational qualifications, previous attendance on family learning programmes, or the number of books in the home.

Although parents knew something about how reading is taught at school and how phonics is used, parents also reported an increase in their *understanding* of these processes. For example, of those parents who completed the questionnaires, 35% moved from knowing only 'a bit' about the teaching of reading and using phonics in the reading process, to knowing 'a lot'. There also was a significant increase in parents' confidence in helping their children with their homework ($t(112) = -3.44, p<0.001$).

However, when we looked at parents' *beliefs* about their own and the school's role in the development of children's literacy, we did not find evidence of any substantive change.

We conclude that the significant changes seen on the 'beliefs and understandings' scale were explained by an increase in parents' understanding of the teaching of literacy in schools and their confidence in helping their children.

We also looked at the characteristics of provision and how they were related to any changes in parents' understandings of literacy. There was some indication that on programmes where parents had an opportunity to focus on their own learning experiences ($F(1,108) = 13.2, p<0.001$), and/or own interests, ($F(1,108) = 6.8, p = 0.01$), they experienced greater increases in their understanding of school literacies.

Half of the interviewed parents reported that, after only a few weeks of attending the course, they were already beginning to gain a much better understanding of how the school teaches literacy. An example:

Sometimes it's just the small things that make such a difference. It is early days really, but the things that [the tutor] spoke about, really just

how the kids are being taught in school, and just to be able to carry that on so I'm not confusing Marion even more

A second example stems from an early stage in a course, but shows that parents were already learning a great deal about teaching literacy, and that the act of reading was becoming more pleasurable for them:

Parent: I have a lot of trouble with my daughter, she's only five, and all hell breaks loose when we are trying to do reading, writing, spelling at home, and we both end up... it's been tears and fighting and screaming, you know, and mainly I didn't, like at the minute she's just kind of, now I'm understanding what phonics is and how it's taught in school, and how Maxine's [the child] actually taught it, they give me like little hints and tips, like games that help with the phonics, and your reading and your writing, so trying to make it more fun so it's not so stressful, because it's an awful thing because you are always trying to do the best, but then you get to a point where, you know, if you are going to end up arguing all the time you get to dread it.

Researcher: Yeah, I know what you mean.

Parent: It's kind of like, it's been good to see how Maxine does it, and you kind of know what phonics is, but actually like see how it's taught in school, so when she comes home you can continue in the same way. Because a lot of the time I was like trying to explain to Maxine how I thought it was done, and she was getting confused and then we'd end up getting upset with each other, so yeah, it's been really good so far.

Researcher: So have things seemed to have improved at home with Maxine?

Parent: Yeah, definitely. I mean it is still only early days, but a few of the things like we did a reading tree, you know, so obviously Maxine's enjoying that, reading a bit more, she's more willing to want to read because she wants to get leaves on the reading tree, and just little games that you know I really think are helping with her reading and writing, you know, like the sounds and things, we've just done lots of little things, so nothing major, but you know spending a couple more minutes doing things that are fun rather than just sat down and what's this, what's that?

At the end of their course, half of 24 parents reported that they had a 'much better' or 'deeper' understanding and greater appreciation of how school literacies are taught; nine thought that their understanding had increased 'quite a lot', while three thought that they had 'a bit more' knowledge. 94% of parents who completed questionnaires stated that the course helped them to understand how their child was being taught at school, although we do not know how much their understanding changed, and in what ways. All our data suggests that the great majority of parents felt better able to support their child with school homework, and could use at least some of the strategies and terminology used at school while reading with their children – as when, for example, they were helping their children with spellings. Many parents stated that it was important to use the same methods and vocabulary as used at school in order to minimise confusion and misunderstanding. These points are exemplified in the quotations that follow, taken from interviews with two parents:

You send a child to school and you expect teachers to teach them to do these things. Again, you don't really know how it's happening. Because I now know these tricks that the teachers are using, as I said before, I can reinforce them in the house, so it means that it's continued education, because a child goes to school to learn but they are with you most of the time, so you've got to make the most of that time that you have with them. But I've got three children and it's very difficult to split my time between the three, so anything I can learn of how school's doing things I can then reiterate in the house, and also it means if I think they are struggling in a certain area I can speak to the teacher in the same language, I've got an understanding. It's not like the teacher's speaking French and I'm speaking German, we are speaking the same language because we know what's being taught, you know. So I do think I've learnt more about how a child of that age learns things.

Actually it's surprising how, when they showed, when [name of tutor] showed, on her laptop, she showed actually about phonics and the pronunciations of the phonics, it was quite interesting to actually have seen that, where a lady is sounding them out, and you get to see her doing that, rather than actually just sort of getting a bit of, you know, handed out paper that we might have got when the children first sort of started in reception. And I guess, I think there needs to be a bit more done, I don't know, on the understanding. I think as parents, because we want to know that we are getting it right at home, if, you know, if we are not really able to deliver what, it's a difficult one because then I feel if we don't know probably how it's being taught in school, or what they've covered, this is where I find it a little bit confusing.

This last sentence is evidence that some schools might do more to offer guidance to parents on strategies for reading with their children. While some parents recalled that they had been invited into school (usually by the child's Reception teacher) and given advice on what to do during parent-child interactions over texts, others said that they had not been given much information, and that making good this deficit was one of the main benefits from their course:

Well like with digraphs, split digraphs, we never had anything like that when I was at school. So yeah, it's basically just to know what your kids are talking about, because a lot of the time you get sent stuff home from school, in a newsletter or in their books and things, but there's nothing ever explained to you about how stuff's been taught.

Summary

Although almost all parents at the very beginning of their programme believed that reading and writing homework is important for their child's learning, only two thirds of parents felt confident about helping their child. Parents reported gaps in their understanding of how reading is taught at school, and of the role of phonics, in particular, in teaching and learning literacy. Unsurprisingly, parents who had attended a prior family literacy course reported having better knowledge of how reading is taught at school (including knowledge of phonics).

Most parents considered that the responsibility for the general literacy development of their children should be shared equally between the school and themselves. However, while reading was perceived as a subject for which school and parents were equally responsible, the school was thought to have the greater responsibility for teaching writing and spelling.

Between the two time points in our research, we found a significant increase in the confidence that enables parents to better support their child with their homework. Parental understanding of how reading (including use of phonics) is taught at school also improved, and this was found to be associated with attendance at a family literacy programme. As we found with parents' literacy habits, programmes that focus on parents' learning experiences and interests are associated with a greater increase in parental understanding of school literacies.

These findings themselves give evidence of the significance of the alignment between parent and school literacy practices.

In the following chapter we turn to consider parents' family literacy activities and practices.

9. Family literacy activities

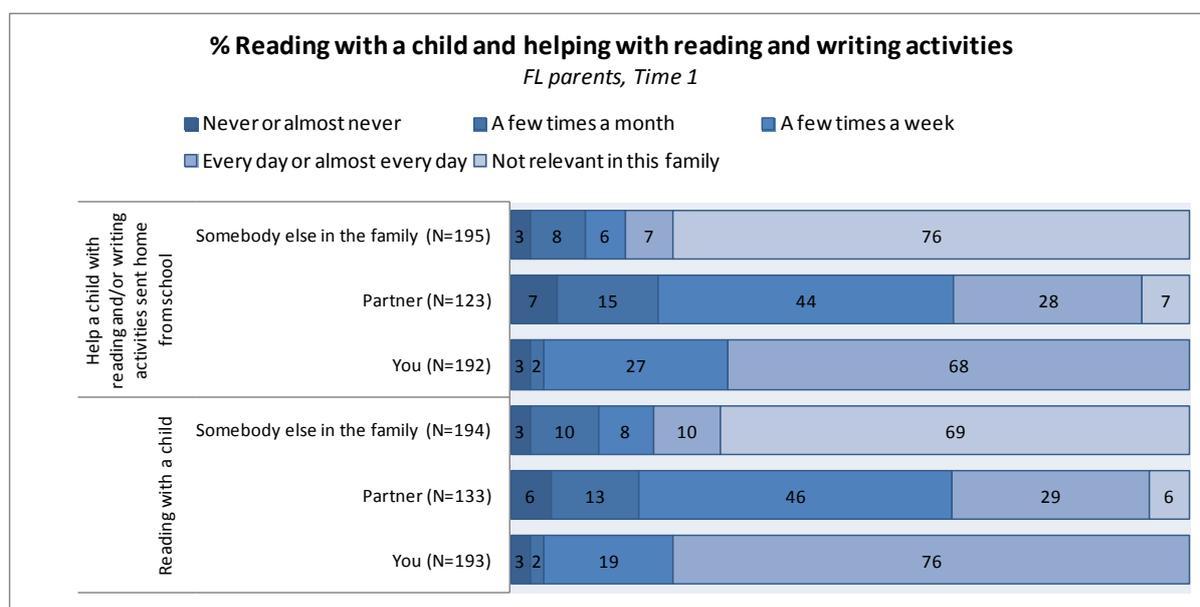
In this chapter we return to Dimension 4 of the HLE, which is focussed on how parents and children join together in pursuing literacy practices and activities. We look at the most popular of these activities, and their frequency, and we report any significant changes in these practices. Two of the three principal research questions are picked up here: the first, relating to the impact of family literacy programmes on the HLE and on any shared literacy activities; the second, relating to how parents implement what they learn on programmes in their homes. We also report on the areas of provision that parents considered as the most enjoyable and useful.

9.1 Frequencies of shared literacy activities

Over three-quarters of parents who attended family literacy programmes read with their children every day or almost every day (76%), with a further 19% reading with them a few times a week (see Figure 9-1). About a third (35%) stated that their partners read with their children every day or at least a few times a week. Since 95% of parents who completed the questionnaire were women, we can conclude that most were the main reader to their children, and that very few partners read with their children very often. It was very rare for any other family member to read with a child. (Note: 30% of the data on partners sharing reading practices was missing.)

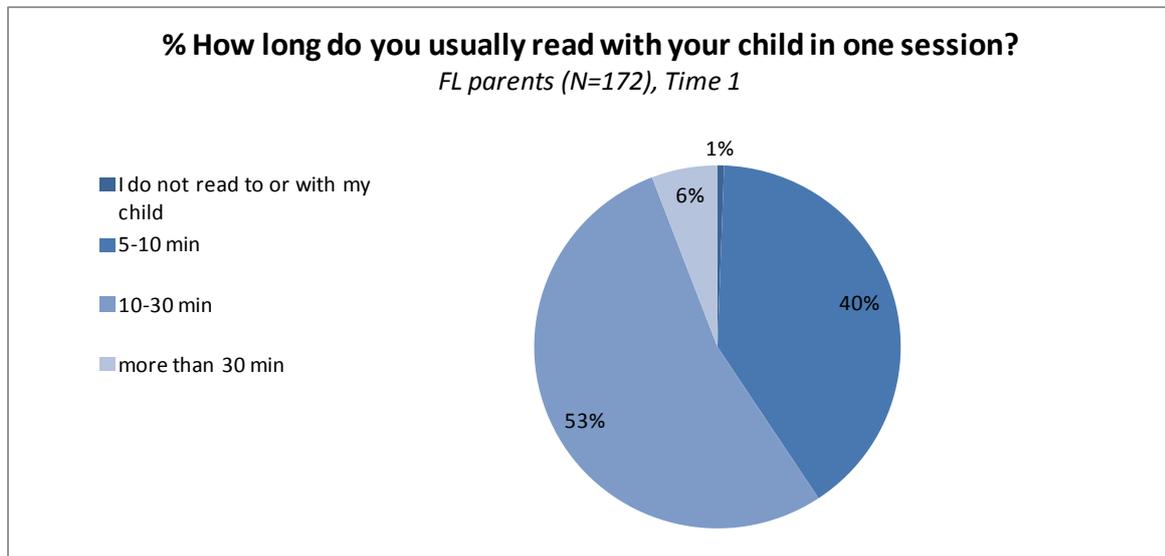
It is a similar picture with respect to helping children with the reading and writing activities sent home from schools (see Figure 9-1). 68% of parents (again almost all women) helped their children with these activities every day or almost every day, and 27% did so a few times a week.

Figure 9-1: Shared reading and writing activities



With regard to the length of reading sessions (Figure 9-2), and according to parents' self-reports, the most frequently mentioned duration was 10 to 30 minutes per session (53%), followed by sessions of 5-10 minutes (40%).

Figure 9-2: Length of shared reading sessions



We had an opportunity to ask 18 parents during interviews if they set aside special times for reading with their child. Five replied that they were 'flexible' and fitted in reading 'as and when', and 13 replied that they generally allotted times and routines for reading activities. Two parents reported that they read with their child in the morning, which was often a quieter time than at other times in the day.

The most common pattern took the form of a child reading their reading scheme book to their mother soon after returning home from school, and then, later, choosing their own book around bedtime.

[It's] when he comes home from school it depends what mood he's in. If he's in a mood then I won't even bother asking him, but usually I will get his school book out the way. If not that will be done at night, but other than that he'll have a normal story at night if he wants one, because he'll say, but we do it with my other son as well, he has a book every night.

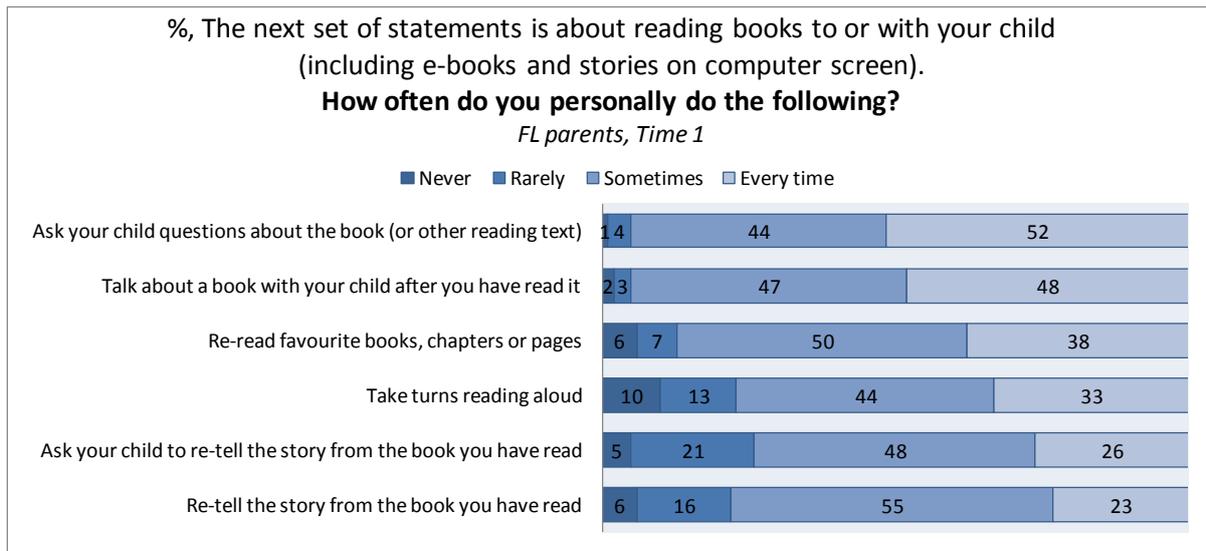
In this case, the mother appears to regard the activity of reading the child's school reading scheme book as something to be got 'out of the way', to be ticked off and entered into the school reading diary. Later in the same interview she indicated that her son read his school books on his own, and that there was no joint engagement or interaction between them.

When asked about actual shared reading practices (see Figure 9-3), about half of parents (52%) who completed the questionnaires reported (i) asking their child questions about the book or text and (ii) talking about the reading (48%) every time

they were involved in shared reading with a child. 38% reported (iii) re-reading parts of a favourite story or text, and 33% said that they (iv) took turns in reading aloud, while a further 26% (v) asked their child to re-tell the story and 23% of parents (vi) retold the story themselves every time they read together.

Although most parents did not perform most of the last five literacy practices (ii- vi) every time they read a book or text with their child, around half the parents used these practices, at least on some occasions.

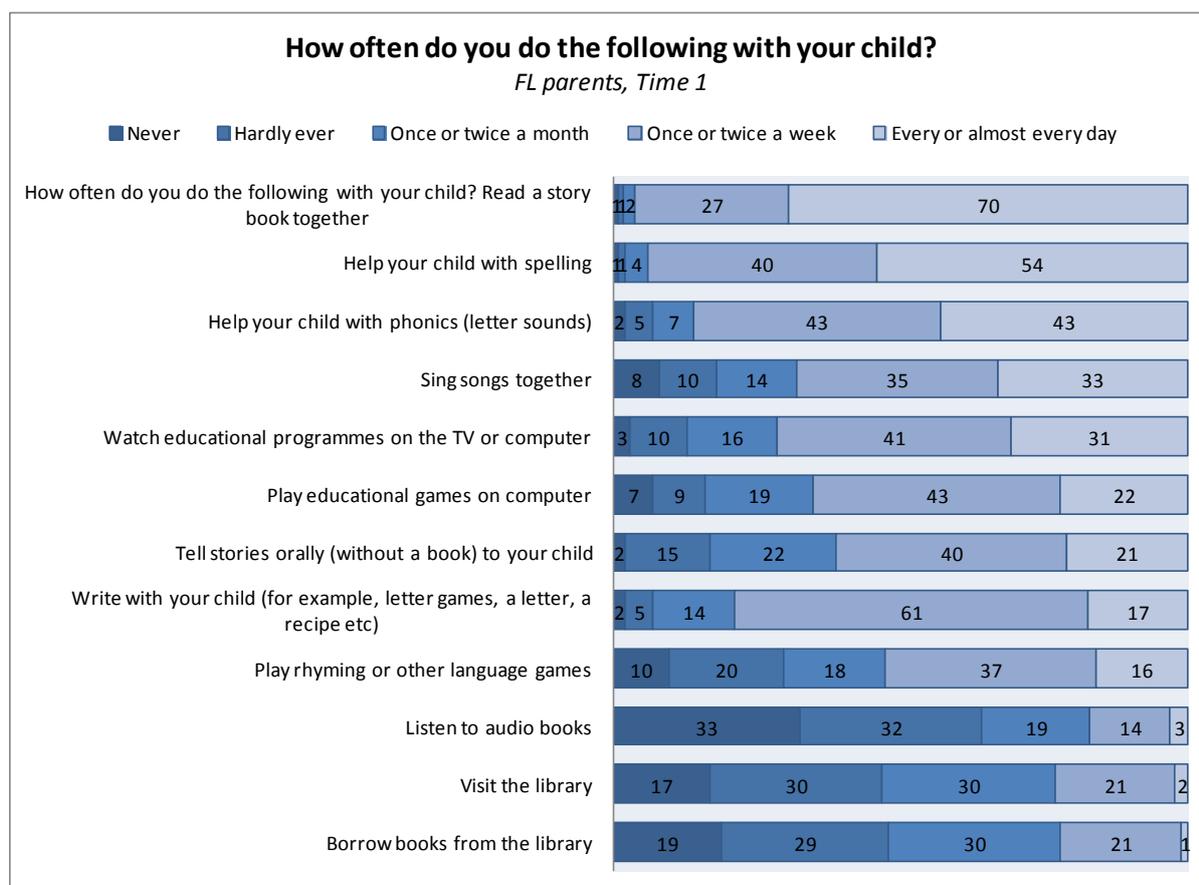
Figure 9-3: Shared reading processes



9.2 The most popular literacy activities

The most commonly reported parental literacy activity was shared reading with their child (see Figure 9-4), and 70% of parents testified to doing this every day. In terms of popularity, this was followed by helping their child with spelling and/or phonics, writing together, singing songs, and watching educational programmes on the TV or computer. Over half (51%) the parents still visited a library and borrowed books at least once or twice a week, and 21% reported visiting almost every day. Playing rhyming or other language games and listening to audio books were relatively infrequent activities.

Figure 9-4: Shared literacy activities



We summed up these shared literacy activities to create a scale ranging from 0 to 75; the higher the value, the more often these shared activities took place (as reported by parents). On this scale, the mean value at Time 1 was 52, with a standard deviation of 9. Based on ANOVA analysis, the data provided evidence that those parents with higher qualifications ($F(5,187) = 3.19, p = 0.01$), those who had more books in general ($F(4,193) = 4.66, p < 0.001$) and more children's books in particular ($F(4,192) = 4.87, p < 0.001$), and those who had attended a family literacy course before ($F(1,198) = 5.51, p = 0.02$) reported being involved in shared literacy activities with their children more often. However we did not find evidence of any relationship between the main languages spoken at home and shared literacy activities.

9.3 Changes between Time 1 and Time 2

A paired-sample t-test was conducted to compare the shared literacy activities between parent and child, in the early days and towards the end the course. The scores were significantly higher towards the end ($M=54.2, SD=6.7$) than in the early days ($M=51.75, SD=8.5$); $t(117) = -3.73, p < 0.001$. Interestingly, there were no differences based on educational qualifications, language spoken at home, previous attendance on family learning programmes, or the number of books in the home with regard to changes in the frequency of shared literacy activities.

We also looked at characteristics of the provision and how these were related to any changes in the frequencies of family shared literacy activities. The greatest positive changes in the frequency of shared family literacy activities at home were experienced by parents on courses that offered them more flexibility, took greater account of their own interests and involved them more in the programme activities. The largest positive change in family literacy activities was experienced by those parents whose tutors did not link their work on the course to the school curriculum ($F(3,101) = 3.0, p = 0.04$), on those programmes where parents focused more on their own learning experiences ($F(1,108) = 9.3, p < 0.001$), and where parents had a sizeable say in the activities they worked on in the parents-only sessions ($F(1,103) = 5.7, p = 0.02$). The parents on programmes in which there was no opportunity to work individually on different activities reported the smallest changes in family literacy activities ($F(2,102) = 3.0, p = 0.05$).

We found no significant change in the frequency of shared reading or helping with homework, which might be explained by the reported high level of activity in these two areas in the early days of the programme. However, there was a slight increase in the amount of time parents spent on reading sessions ($t(118) = -1.88, p = 0.06$) by the end of the course.

We investigated the frequency of other shared literacy activities. Some were already taking place frequently, and we found no evidence of a change. These included: reading a story together, writing, helping with spelling, phonics or singing songs together or playing educational games on computer. However, other activities did increase in frequency, including: telling stories (without a book) ($t(117) = -2.18, p = 0.03$), playing rhyming and other language games ($t(117) = -1.93, p = 0.06$), watching educational programmes on TV or computer ($t(117) = -2.26, p = 0.03$), visiting a library ($t(117) = -3.20, p < 0.001$) and borrowing books from the library ($t(117) = -3.62, p < 0.001$).

In general, most interviewed parents spoke of how much they had learned, how much more they now understood about how their child was taught literacy at school, and how they were much more able to offer support at home. This important theme is taken up again below.

In the early days of the course, parents were asked about the single most enjoyable and the most useful part of the course so far. The vast majority reported that it was the pleasure of working and interacting with their child:

Probably when we could work with our kids like directly with our kids, and we can see how good [it is] if we can work with kids together, and we can learn together. It's a really, really brilliant experience, and actually to know what they are doing at this moment in school, and how we can explain new things, is really very important.

Most parents who talked about the most useful part said that it was learning how the school was teaching reading and writing, including the latest, up-to-date methods, and the terminology and vocabulary they thought they should be using at home.

I'd say it's learning all about split digraphs and things like that, before a couple of weeks ago they were a foreign language to me, but now I actually, when Brittany says, when my daughter talks about them, because she is like Year One, but she is learning about them, when she speaks to them I actually understand what she's talking about now, whereas before Christmas I didn't know anything.

When all 28 parents were asked the same question about 'their favourite part' of the course at Time 2 they gave similar replies: 16 said that the best thing was the chance to work with their child and to have quality time together on a one-to-one basis, and many commented on how this had helped to bring them closer together. Five thought the best thing was learning how the school taught literacy, and three said it was making learning fun and making the reading experience more pleasurable. Three parents said that the most enjoyable part was meeting and working with other parents in a mutually supportive atmosphere (see Chapter 10).

When asked again at Time 2 to name the single most useful thing that they had learned on the course, the responses were much more varied than those given earlier. Nine parents again reported that it was learning about how the school was teaching literacy, and how this helped them to avoid different and potentially confusing terminology.

Researcher: And you would say that [learning about school literacies] was the most useful thing then?

Parent: Yeah, definitely, what they do, how they learn at school, then you can support that at home rather than doing it differently.

16 parents thought that what was most useful to them were the ideas they had learned on the course:

It's just gave me so many ideas of what to do with him. I think it's absolutely fantastic

These included how to engage their child more deeply in literacy activities, to make the learning experience richer, more enjoyable and more meaningful, and also learning techniques and strategies for teaching elements of literacy such as spelling, punctuation and grammar. The course also provided ideas that gave opportunities to talk about and use literacy in the HLE and as part of everyday life. Examples of this are provided in the two extracts below:

It's not all about just the reading books that they bring home from school; it's about incorporating it all. For example, the other day we had takeaway pizza, and Rebecca wanted to read everything that was on the takeaway box, and then we had a conversation about Italy, and obviously my little boy joined in, and I've got a two-year-old as well, and she tried to join in, she drew a picture of the flag and stuff. So it's just about, you know, looking for opportunities for literacy as well, and I think that's what you take away from the class, apart from the theory around literacy, and how children are learning their literacy, it's how you can incorporate it in everyday life, that's what parents are having conversations around.

Yes, she's really come on with her reading. And she reads all the time, we've got her into the habit of wherever we go she tends to, like if the bus is coming she'll read the front of the bus, and if we get on the bus she reads the adverts on the bus and things, so it's really made a massive difference on the way she looks at the outside world.

An important theme to emerge during the cycle of interviews was the change in the quality of interactions and experiences between parent and child when they engaged in the reading process together. Of the 23 (of 28) parents, just two remarked that they had not noticed any particular differences. Twenty-one had noticed a number of changes, and in most cases these were substantive and potentially far-reaching. Our quantitative data also supported this finding: there were significant changes in how parents carried out shared reading activities and practices between the two time points ($t(117) = -3.46, p < 0.001$).

Looking at the data on separate activities, we found no significant change with regard to asking questions about a book and discussing a book with a child after reading it. However, the frequency of those two activities was already quite high at the beginning of the course (see Figure 9-3). We found a significant increase across four of the other activities used during the shared reading process: how often parents retold the story from the book ($t(117) = -2.39, p = 0.02$), or asked their child to do it ($t(117) = -2.27, p = 0.03$), re-read favourite books, chapters or pages ($t(117) = -1.77, p = 0.08$) and took turns reading aloud ($t(117) = -3.56, p < 0.001$).

In interviews parents stated that the greatest change after their attendance on the course was that they and their children were making more of their joint engagement with the text. Contrary to evidence from our quantitative data, many of the interviewed parents said that they were now asking far more questions to assess comprehension, and there was a greater focus on understanding and other reading skills concerned with prediction.

You know actually you know the way, as we are doing before, writing and reading, it was different, we'd read and we'd keep in mind so many

things, and when I am reading a story I now ask my child what will happen next, and he says something. Before that I wasn't asking him any questions. So many questions I now ask, what will happen there, what will happen next, and what have you concluded when you have read the story? What was that connected to and what he was doing and things like that.

A further significant change to emerge was that the reading experience had become more pleasurable for both parent and child, and reading was an activity to be enjoyed and looked forward to, rather than as just 'something to be done', or 'ticked off', and entered into the child's school reading diary. Parents felt more relaxed and were more patient, letting the child take greater control; they did not feel as if they had to correct every mispronunciation and, rather than simply tell the children whatever word they may not have known, they would first ask the child to have a guess. Some of these changes are illustrated in the extracts below, taken from interviews with a number of parents:

Parent: You know, actually reading with him I'm enjoying reading a story with him and doing all the silly sounds and doing all the stuff that goes with it, you know, because he's enjoying it, so I am. Whereas before when I was saying read this story, just read this story, he wasn't enjoying it, and neither was I, you know, because I felt like I was having a battle rather than sitting and reading with him having a bit of fun, it was a battle, whereas now we actually both enjoy it.

Researcher: Yes, now it's reading for pleasure, it seems.

Parent: Yeah, yeah, it's reading but enjoying reading, not reading for the sake of reading, whereas before that's what I were doing, I were trying to get him learning to read, but because I was like no, sit down, you've got to do this, you have to do this, he just wasn't interesting and didn't do it. Whereas now he does, he enjoys it and he might say the odd word wrong and I don't point it out to him, I leave it, because again it's that telling them they are wrong again, and then they don't like it.

Researcher: So are you doing different things when you read with the children now?

Parent: Yes.

Researcher: So what's different now than a few months ago?

Parent: I'd say I'm a lot more relaxed. At one time it was OK, come on, get your books out, get it done type of thing, what does that letter say? And yes, I would praise, because, you know, I understand in my job all about praise, but I'd say I've a lot more time, you know, I'll set aside twenty minutes, instead of just rushing it through, five, ten minutes, or I'll put the three- and four-year-old to bed and me and Robert will have, you know, ten, fifteen minutes after, even if I'm just reading him books, following the words with my finger, and he takes turns more so he enjoys the story now, and take the emphasis off having to say what the word is, because it's all just use isn't it, it's however many times you've seen a word that you'll recall the word.

Researcher: Yes, so it's fair to say that you are doing more reading with Robert, but also the quality of the kind of experience is better as well.

Parent: Yeah.

Some parents observed that their children were gaining in confidence and were initiating the reading interaction between them. This may be connected to parental perceptions of their children's reading having improved over the time of the course.

Our findings suggest that parents were acting as surrogate teachers or as *parent teachers* (See and Gorard, 2015). In their review of relations between parental behaviours and educational outcomes See and Gorard argue that, when parents act in this pedagogic capacity, this can lead to improvements in children's cognitive abilities.

Summary

Parents reported reading with their children every day, or almost every day, and regularly supporting them with literacy work sent home from school. A much smaller proportion used specific reading strategies or practices, such as taking turns reading aloud or asking a child to retell a story. Courses were found to be related to significant changes in areas such as these. Although there was no significant change in the frequency of shared reading, or in parents helping with homework, we found evidence of significant changes in the quality of interactions in joint reading. Evidence from interviews strongly suggested that many parents were now asking more questions to assess comprehension, and that they put a greater emphasis on understanding. A further, and potentially far-reaching change, was that the reading experience had become more pleasurable for both parent and child.

The main change in activities and practices occurred in the case of: oral storytelling, playing rhyming and other language games, watching educational programmes on a TV or computer, and visiting a library and/or borrowing books from the library.

The greatest positive changes in the frequency of shared family literacy activities at home were experienced by parents on courses that offered them more flexibility, took greater account of their own interests and involved them more in the programme activities.

A significant question, worth exploring further, is the relation between parents attending a course and their assuming the role of (surrogate) teachers, and the impact this has on their children's literacy development.

In the penultimate chapter we look at a series of parental relationships within the context of family literacy programmes.

10. Relationships

In this chapter we look at parents' relationships: with their children, other parents on the course, the tutor and with the school, including their child's teachers. We suggest that parental relationships are related to levels of parental social capital. We also consider course tutors' relations with their main school contact. Most of our evidence is drawn from interviews with parents, but findings are also supplemented by data from parent and tutor questionnaires, along with a number of our own observations.

10.1 Parents' relationship with their son/daughter or other members of the family

Almost three-quarters (74%) of parents reported in the survey that playing the games and activities had given them a reason to spend more time with their child; 63% felt that this made their relationship closer, and 58% said that games and activities encouraged them to talk to each other. 59% said that the family literacy course itself had brought them nearer to their child.

89% of parents who attended the programmes said they played literacy games made or learned in class at least a few times, with 45% reporting having played them at home a few times a week or every day. The games also involved other members of the family. Slightly more than two-thirds of parents (70%) testified that other family members joined in with these activities. Almost two-thirds of parents (64%) said that siblings played, a further 40% mentioned fathers, and 13% said that one or more grandparents took part in these activities and games at home. Finally, in 8% of families, uncles, aunts and cousins joined in.

Recalling that the great majority of parents spoke about the joint session with their child as being the most enjoyable part of the family literacy course, just over half the parents commented on their relationship with the child they attended the course with; some also mentioned other family members such as their siblings and partners. Most reported that they had become closer, and in some instances much closer, to their son or daughter as a result of the course. This applied not only to literacy activities but also to other areas of family life. Some parents talked about the important benefit for the child of watching them, as a parent, modelling how to be a learner.

It's perfect really because you don't often get an opportunity to spend quality time just with one child doing something that interests them, and I think it's great that the child sees you doing things with them and learning as well at the same time. Because I say to my children every day is a school day, every day you'll learn something new, and I think it's important that you lead by example and that you are doing something with them.

Two parents spoke of how the course was benefiting other, particularly younger, siblings who sometimes wanted to join in with the activities (the games, for example). Moreover, the knowledge and skills that parents were acquiring on their course could be passed on to younger children as they grew up:

Researcher: That's right, but you've learnt to use these things with Ollie in the future, even if they are not really applicable to Melody now.

Parent: And we will not make mistakes the same as with Melody when she was reading and could not say what the story was about. And definitely we will keep an eye on Ollie if he can read and understand what's in the story, and even say who wrote this story, yeah, just explain [to] me who was there or answer simple questions.

Two mothers talked about how the course had helped their children forge a closer relationship with their father: the weekly routine involved the children explaining what they had done in class to their father, who then also joined in with the games and took over some of the teaching responsibility.

10.2 Parents' relationships with other parents

Almost two thirds (65%) of parents reported in the questionnaires that they had made friends on the course, and three-fifths (60%) stated that they now felt more able to talk and work with other parents.

Parents spoke in interviews about how it was interesting to find out how much time other parents spent reading with their children, and how other family circumstances were similar or different to their own. It was good to make new friends and, even though some parents already knew each other, some became closer during their course. Over two-thirds of parents mentioned how much they appreciated the social side of the course, and some spoke of how much they had learned from other parents. Just over a third (35%) of parents in the survey mentioned building up a support network, and this suggests that they were building up resources of social capital.

Yeah, it was really good to meet all the parents, because you are not thinking from one point of view, like you hear different point of view from different mums, like how they are coping and their ideas and everything, so when we share the ideas between each other it gives more confidence how you can deal with the situation in each scenario. It really helped, like keeping in touch, and now we are good friends, now we have exchanged phone numbers and everything, so we just speak to each other even when we are not going to class anymore.

10.3 Parents' relations with the family literacy tutor

When asked during interviews to give their opinion of the tutor, parents used the same positive epithets that they used to talk about their overall course evaluation, and a similar proportion rated tutors very highly. They were seen not only as being very friendly but also knowledgeable and helpful, and during observations tutors were often seen to explain strategies and concepts slowly and clearly.

She is a lovely lady, first of all. With the adults she is absolutely lovely, she teaches us to our level, we never felt bad, never felt like we can't do it, she is always encouraging, always encouraging. She, you know, she can tell us off like don't disturb anybody, don't try to be smart in front of anybody who doesn't know the answer. She takes us so nicely that everybody on an individual level loved her.

During two observations the tutors were perceived as not having a relationship with the children that was as strong as it was with the adults. This was commented upon by a few parents:

Yeah, it seemed...when it came to the children, yeah, when it came to them, there was a different...I can't think of the word, but it definitely was very different, compared to that first hour where we could talk and discuss a lot more. And I think the children came in and it took a while for it all to calm down I think, for things to sort of...yeah, so I think there's the control element, but then again I guess you are gonna get different kids, yeah, as well sort of all factors once again sort of play a part, where you kind of get kids maybe not wanting to participate as much

However, in general, parents commented on how the tutors were equally as good with adults and children, noting how the children listened carefully to the tutors' instructions.

She's got a real command of the classroom in such a nice way. The children really engage with her, it's just so obvious the children do like her, but it's not like as in she's a friend, it's as in she's someone I have to listen to and respect, you know what I mean, there's a difference between being a friend and being a teacher, and she has got a lovely manner with them.

In response to questionnaires tutors described parents' attitudes towards the course as being 'very good' (18) or 'good' (6), and only one tutor said it was 'average'.

10.4 Parents' relationships with the school

56% of parents who completed the questionnaires said that, as a result of attending the course, they now felt more confident to come into school, and 51% mentioned that this included talking to their child's teacher.

The family literacy programmes helped to develop closer home school partnerships. Over half the parents interviewed believed that their relationship with the school had improved and was now closer than previously. Parents also felt more able to approach teachers and to use the same language as they would expect to find used in schools. One mother, however, said she was talking to her child's teacher less often as she now had greater trust in her.

I probably don't need to go to them as much now, because whereas before, you know, I'd be 'Oh this is stressful', you know, this homework you are sending Jack home with is causing problems, whereas now I kind of know a bit more and I'm a bit more patient, we are happy working together, I don't really need to go to the teacher and it's not a big deal anymore, we'll just get on and do it. They are all really good so if there were any problems I would feel comfortable going in anyway.

Another mother was going to volunteer to be a classroom helper, and another secured paid employment in the school as a parent language liaison officer. Out of eight parents who reported no change, five indicated that this was because they already had a very positive relationship with the school before the course. Of these, two were school governors, and two worked as volunteer helpers in classrooms. There was also evidence that some children's relationships with schools were also improving, as they became more confident learners as a result of working alongside their mothers and in an environment that they perceived to be safe and less threatening.

Researcher: Has your child gained confidence from being on the course?

Parent: Yeah, I really, yeah I really do, like I say my daughter's quite shy and she's not very, she won't put her hand up because she feels like she'll get the answer wrong, but in the group she didn't feel like that, she put her hand up and even if the answer was wrong nobody said anything to her to make her feel like, you know, not very comfortable in the situation. So her confidence has really built a lot since the course I think.

10.5 Tutors' relations with main school contacts

Tutors' relationships with school contacts were generally positive: tutors on all 25 courses reported that communications with their main point of contact in the school

were 'very good' (19) or 'good' (6); however, tutors on six courses felt that they had only 'average' or 'poor' collaborations with other members of teaching and/or administrative staff. There were comparatively few liaisons between tutors and the KS1 teachers whose classes the children came from. According to tutors, there were regular communications (once a week or every two weeks) with their main school contact on only five of the courses; on another five they were in touch only a few times during the course; on a further five courses they seldom liaised; and on 10 courses they did not communicate at all. However, on some courses children not only came from different classes within the same year group, they also came from different year groups, and this made the process of liaising and planning particularly difficult.

Summary

There were positive changes in the relationship between parents and their child as a result of attending family literacy programmes. Two thirds of parents made friends and formed support networks during the course, so developing the resources that make up social capital. Almost all parents rated their tutors very highly and over half of parents said that, as a result of attending the course, they now felt more confident to go into school and talk to their child's teacher. Taken together, our evidence strongly suggests that family literacy courses help to foster home-school partnerships and closer parent school alignment.

In the final chapter we present our conclusions and a number of implications for policy, practice and research.

Conclusions and Implications

This study of family literacy provision yields two principal findings. First, family literacy programmes have a positive effect on the reading attainment of children; and second, families that participate in programmes experience extensive and sustainable changes in their home literacy environment, as evidenced in increased parental understanding of school literacy processes and pedagogies, as well as in the frequency of parent-child shared literacy activities.

However, as no comparison group of parents not participating in the programme was available, this finding has a lower reliability than the finding on children's attainment and cannot provide evidence of a direct causal relationship between programme participation and changes in the HLE. The data can only support the association between the parental involvement in the family literacy programmes and any changes in their literacy behaviours and attitudes.

Our work builds on previous research, providing further evidence to demonstrate that family literacy is highly effective in reaching both generations, and that it has a positive impact on a range of outcomes, including as these apply to family literacy providers, schools, parents and their children. Programmes can not only improve reading skills, they can also enrich family relations, increase parental empowerment, develop levels of social and cultural capital, enhance parent-school relations, increase home school partnerships and improve parent-school alignment.

The context for family literacy provision has changed markedly since NRDC carried out its previous evaluation in 2007-09. It was difficult to find programmes that met the project's criteria for eligibility (particularly longer programmes), and both LA managers and researchers often found it challenging to persuade schools of the benefits of running programmes and of being involved in the research. Provision was more fragmented than in the past, with more LAs outsourcing their programmes.

There is evidence here to inform the design of future family literacy programmes. Certain characteristics of provision appear to have an increased impact on reading attainment. For example, children showed a greater increase in reading scores when tutors had received specific training in family literacy, and reading with 'Big' books and making story boxes were particularly successful strategies. There were also larger positive outcomes in children's reading when the reading process between adults and children was modelled during classes, which parents could observe and imitate at home; when parents were promoted as role models and encouraged to have greater involvement in their children's learning; and when parents were encouraged to focus on their own learning experiences.

Most parents who attend family literacy programmes tend to be women in their mid to late 30s and we did not find a disproportionate numbers of parents with low qualifications as compared with the general population. The programmes seemed to attract a high proportion of ethnic minority parents with English as their second language.

Family literacy provision should allow for some flexibility in delivery and content, with consideration given to parents' prior experiences, current interests and needs. Programmes that utilised the learning experiences and interests of parents were associated with greater positive changes in parental understanding of school pedagogies, literacy attitudes, and in the quality and quantity of shared literacy activities in the home setting.

The study shows that the most common motivation for parents to enrol in a family literacy programme is to learn about school literacies and pedagogies, in order that they are more able support their children at home. Although almost all parents were aware of the importance of their children having sound literacy skills, parents also reported gaps in their understanding of how reading is taught at school, including the role of phonics in the literacy curriculum. Our evidence suggests that family literacy courses are an effective way of developing and improving parental understanding of these aspects of literacy.

Compared to writing and spelling, parents perceive reading as an area in which they can take a larger responsibility since it is, perhaps, less technically forbidding; more importantly, for the majority of households, it forms an integral part of family life. Shared reading represents just one example of how family literacy programmes can serve more than one generation, and lead to benefits that pass from parents to children, and from children to parents. The reading experience, in particular, was found to become more pleasurable for both parents and children by the end of their course.

The majority of parents report reading with their children every, or almost every day, and regularly helping them with literacy work sent home from school. Our study demonstrates that, although there was no significant change in the quantity of shared reading, or in parents helping children with homework, there were important positive changes in the quality of interactions in shared reading.

The parents rate the provision and the tutors very highly, and seem able to translate and implement literacy ideas and strategies learned in classes into the home setting, and beyond any participation in the programme. In effect, many parents learn to act as 'surrogate teachers' in the home setting.

Although much of the underlying pedagogy of programmes appears to require the transmission of school practices from tutor to parent to child, family literacy involves much more than simply 'teaching school literacy'; it puts the family at the heart of the

educational enterprise and increases parental appreciation of their central role in their child's education in general, and literacy development in particular.

Implications: policy makers

- Family literacy provision should remain integral to government educational policy.
- Local Authority managers frequently suggest that family learning provision (including family literacy) is undermined by a lack of long-term, consistent funding. If funding were ring-fenced, as previously, it would be possible to plan provision strategically. These views are consistent with 'Adult Literacy and Numeracy: Government Response to the House of Commons'. See recommendation 16. (BIS, 2014).

Implications: practitioners and providers

- Continue to use wider family learning (small 'taster' courses) as a first step to engaging schools in family literacy provision.
- Allow for the extension of short courses into standard courses where there is demand from parents.
- Build up and maintain key partnerships with schools.
- The messages that family literacy programmes lead to higher levels of literacy attainment and aid school improvement needs to be communicated more effectively to schools and LAs in order to encourage more schools to become involved.
- Some family literacy courses could be better advertised, and their aims spelt out more clearly to parents, particularly those harder to reach, with low level qualifications in areas of multiple deprivation.
- Tutors should receive specific training in family literacy pedagogies.
- There were larger positive outcomes in children's reading when the reading process was modelled between adults and children during classes. Providers should consider making this practice integral to all programmes.

Implications: research

Although the study has shown that family literacy provision has a substantive positive impact, further research is needed to:

- Explore whether changes in children and parents are greater when programmes are longer than the average 30 hours of contact time found in this study.

- Investigate whether gains in children’s reading and writing are likely to be greater if more programmes return to the original “classic” model of the 1990s, including discrete provision for children in addition to parents-only and joint sessions.
- Investigate, using longitudinal methods, how enduring the effects of family literacy courses are on skills, attitudes, understanding, practices, relationships and aspirations, and whether these continue to change over time.
- Compare the impact for disadvantaged groups to explore if the programmes have any potential to reduce the attainment gaps. For example, to compare effect sizes between EAL and non-EAL children, low and high achievers using larger samples.
- Carry out further studies on parental attitudes and behaviours and broader HLE using larger sample sizes and control group to check the robustness and reliability of the findings from this study.

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Appendix 1: Challenges in conducting the research

This appendix provides further information on the challenges involved in data collection. These are grouped under two headings: (1) difficulties in recruiting family literacy courses, and (2) reluctance of schools to take part in the research.

Difficulties of recruiting family literacy courses

The process of recruiting courses to this research study began in June 2013. Researchers attended a meeting of the Family Learning Local Authority Group (FLLAG) in London to publicise the project to managers of family literacy provision across England with the aim of securing eligible family literacy courses for the start of fieldwork in September 2013. It became apparent that the landscape of provision had changed since the previous evaluation by NRDC (2007-09), and that far fewer family literacy courses were running than had been projected. As well as the reduction of funding in real terms (see Chapter 3), managers in some areas were converting family literacy courses into ESOL courses (e.g. “English for Families”) to address the needs of adult learners with English as an Additional Language (EAL). With the reduction of ESOL provision, many more adults were attending family literacy courses needing to learn English, particularly speaking and listening. Although family learning (FL) does not run ESOL courses it does run provision called ‘Family Language’, which has the additional advantage over ESOL provision that it is free.

FL managers in some cases could not get school to agree to run the programmes and there were various reasons for that. Some LA managers told us that schools were hesitant to release Y2 pupils to a family literacy class because it interfered with curriculum time that was in part their preparation for the May SATs. There were also worries about finding a dedicated room for the parents and, perhaps, a crèche. Some schools did not want to find a supply teacher to release a KS1 teacher to take the children-only session, even though the LA would generally fund this provision, and in some cases provide the KS1 teacher.

In early autumn 2013 researchers emailed 130 FL managers from the nine geographical administrative regions, and this initial contact was followed up by telephone. Almost all LA managers we contacted were highly supportive of the project and its aim of evidencing the impact of family literacy. However, the majority of LA managers were either not running any family literacy provision in 2013-14, or were offering no courses that matched our eligibility criteria.

By the start of fieldwork, a cluster of around 40 LAs with suitable courses in the 2013-14 school year remained, and the final 27 courses were drawn from this pool. However, a further 20 courses were set up but did not run, generally because not enough parents could be attracted in the first few weeks.

Reluctance of schools to take part in the research

Another challenge was encountered at the school level. Although family literacy managers were keen to be involved in the research, schools were often in their reluctant. This was compounded by the difficulties researchers experienced in making telephone contact with busy head teachers.

The reluctance of schools to take part appears related to a number of factors.

Many schools did not want to administer our reading and writing tests, which were seen as an added stress⁵⁷ to their workloads. All schools regularly tested their children in reading already and so, despite the project promising to provide a literacy profile of their children (which could be compared against the national profiles), schools did not see the point of having additional evaluative information. Some schools agreed to take part but then wanted to use their own reading tests: this was impossible because we needed the testing procedure to be standardised. Our summer term fieldwork coincided with new phonics testing for Year 1 pupils (June), which made our tests a burden too far.

A number of schools we approached had a temporary head teacher, and some schools that were either Academies or Free Schools of ten were at their early stages of setting up in their new form. Schools were also sometimes slow to recruit parents to courses, with publicity information circulated only in the week before the course started – too late for us to engage the courses in our research. This process, in which course recruitment began with parents and not with children with literacy needs, marked a significant shift from that observed in our previous evaluation (Swain et al., 2009).

⁵⁷In one LA the FL manager offered schools money for supply cover for testing the pupils but schools still refused.

Appendix 2: Family literacy questionnaires for parents at Time 1 and Time 2

PARENT/CARER QUESTIONNAIRE: PART 1

(For Parents attending the Family Literacy/English Class)

Family Literacy Study

Dear Parent/Carer

We would be grateful if **the parent/carer who attends Family Literacy classes** could take a few minutes to complete this survey. We are trying to find out more about the reading and writing you and your child do at home.

There will be another short survey (Part 2) to complete at the end of your Family Literacy course. If both parents attend then it does not matter who fills in the questionnaire as long as the same person also completes the end of course survey.

Participation in this research is voluntary and all answers are **COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL**.

When you have completed the questionnaire please put it in the envelope provided and hand it back to your family literacy tutor.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO FILL IN THIS BOX BEFORE YOU RETURN YOUR SURVEY

Your full name.....
Your child's name.....
Your child's date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY).....
Name of your child's school.....

Many thanks for your help; your time is much appreciated.

Researchers: Jon Swain (j.swain@ioe.ac.uk) and Olga Cara (o.cara@ioe.ac.uk)

SECTION A: ABOUT YOU

1. **What is your age (in years)?** _____
2. **What is your relationship to the child who brought this questionnaire home?**
 - Mother/Stepmother/ Female carer
 - Father/ Stepfather/Male carer
 - Grandmother
 - Grandfather
 - Other (please state) _____
3. **What is your HIGHEST educational qualification? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**
 - No educational qualifications
 - An Entry level qualification
 - Level 1 (e.g. GCSE [grade D or E] or BTEC Introductory Diploma)
 - Level 2 (e.g. GCSE (grade C or above) or 'O' Level or BTEC First Diploma)
 - Level 3 (e.g. 'A' or 'AS' level or BTEC National Diploma or Extended Certificate)
 - Level 4 (e.g. Certificate of Higher Education)
 - Level 5 (e.g. Diploma of Higher Education or Foundation degree)
 - Level 6 (e.g. Bachelor degree, graduate certificates and diplomas; BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards)
 - Level 7 and above (e.g. MA, PhD, PGCE or Advanced professional awards, certificates and diplomas)
 - Overseas qualification
 - Other (please specify) _____
4. **How many children aged under 18 years live with you?** _____
5. **Approximately how many books are there in your home today?** (Please include library books and e-books; but do not count magazines, newspapers or children's books.) PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY
 - 0- 10
 - 11-25
 - 26-100
 - 101-200
 - more than 200
6. **Approximately how many CHILDREN'S books are there in your home today?** (Please include library books and e-books; but do not count magazines, newspapers or children's books.) PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY
 - 0- 10
 - 11-25
 - 26-50
 - 51-100
 - more than 100

7. How often do YOU read each of the following? TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Every day	At least once a week	About once a month	Never or almost never
Books				
Newspapers				
Magazines				
Digital text on computers, e-readers or tablets				

8. The following statements are about reading. How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
I read only if I have to.				
I like talking about books with other people.				
I like to spend my spare time reading.				
I read only if I need information.				
Reading is an important activity in my home.				
Reading together with my child is an important part of the time we spend together.				

9. Have you ever attended another Family Learning programme? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- Yes, Family Literacy
- Yes, Family Numeracy
- Yes, General Family Learning
- No, I have not attended any Family Learning programmes

10. Why did you join this Family Literacy class? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- To learn how the school teaches my child to read and write.
- To learn how to help my child with his/her homework.
- To be more involved in my child's school life and education.
- To improve my own reading.
- To improve my own writing.
- To gain literacy qualifications.
- To increase my confidence in helping my child with his/her schoolwork.
- To increase my confidence in my own literacy skills.
- Other (please state)_____

SECTION B: ABOUT YOU AND YOUR CHILD

Please note questions in this section use ‘**your child**’ to refer to the Year 1 or Year 2 child who attends Family Literacy classes with you.

11. Is your child male or female?

- Male
 Female

12. What is the main language you speak with your child?

- English
 Other (please state) _____

13. How often do you, your partner, or someone else in the family read to or with your child? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

	You	Your partner	Somebody else in the family
Every day or almost every day			
A few times a week			
A few times a month			
Never or almost never			
Not relevant (e.g. no partner)			

14. How long do you usually read with your child in one session? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Less than 5 minutes
 Between about 5-10 minutes
 Between about 10-30 minutes
 More than 30 minutes
 I do not read to or with my child

15. How often do you, your partner, or someone else in the family help your child with reading and/or writing activities sent home from school? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

	You	Your partner	Somebody else in the family
Every day or almost every day			
A few times a week			
A few times a month			
Never or almost never			
Reading and writing activities are not sent from school			
Not relevant (e.g. no partner)			

21. Who do you think is responsible for developing your child in the following areas? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Just the school	More school than parent/ carer	Both school and parent/ carer	More parent/ carer than school	Just the parent/ carer
Reading					
Writing					
Spelling					
Homework					
Exam/test results					
Behaviour					

22. The next set of statements is about reading books to or with your child (including e-books and stories on computer screen). How often do you personally do the following? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Every time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Ask your child questions about the book (or other reading text)				
Talk about a book with your child after you have read it				
Re-tell the story from the book you have read				
Ask your child to re-tell the story from the book you have read				
Re-read favourite books, chapters or pages				
Take turns reading aloud				

Many thanks for your help with this study.

We would like to interview some parents from Family Literacy classes to talk to them in a little more detail about reading at home and their expectations of the course. PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DETAILS IF YOU ARE INTERESTED.

Interviews will be conducted by telephone and will take about 20 minutes. The interviews will take place in January/February 2014.

If you would like to take part in this please tick the box below and provide contact details. All information will be treated in confidence.

- No
- Yes, I would be happy to take part in a short telephone interview

My telephone number is:

The best time to contact me is

- Daytime
- Evening
- It doesn't really matter, you can try anytime

(optional) My email address is.....

PARENT/CARER QUESTIONNAIRE: PART 2

(For Parents attending the Family Literacy/English Class)

Family Literacy Study

Dear Parent/Carer

We would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. We are trying to find out more about the reading and writing you and your child do at home.

This is the second part of the survey that was distributed earlier in the school year. Some of the questions are the same as we are trying to measure any changes that may have taken place. There are also some new questions about your experience of the Family Literacy course.

It should be completed by the parent/carer who attends Family Literacy classes and who completed Part 1 of the questionnaire.

All answers are **COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL**.

When you have completed the questionnaire please put it in the envelope provided and hand it back to your family literacy tutor.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO FILL IN THIS BOX BEFORE YOU RETURN YOUR SURVEY

Your full name.....

Your child's name.....

Your child's date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY).....

Name of your child's school.....

Many thanks for your help; your time is much appreciated.

Researchers: Jon Swain (j.swain@ioe.ac.uk) and Olga Cara (o.cara@ioe.ac.uk)

SECTION A: ABOUT THE FAMILY LITERACY COURSE

- 1) **During the course, did you make or play any reading or writing games/activities? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**
- Yes (Go to Question 2)
- No (Go to Question 7)
- 2) **How clear were the instructions for making and using these games/activities with your child? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**
- Very clear
- Quite clear
- Not clear
- Instructions were not provided
- 3) **How often have you played these games/activities outside the class with your child? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**
- Every day
- A few times a week
- A few times during the course
- Hardly ever
- Never
- 4) **How long do you usually spend playing these games/activities each week outside the class with your child? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**
- Under 15 minutes for each session
- Between 15-30 minutes for each session
- Over 30 minutes for each session
- Did not use them at home
- 5) **Have other family members joined in playing these games/activities outside the class with you and your child? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY**
- Yes (please specify who) _____
- No
- 6) **What changes, if any, have you noticed after playing the games/activities with your child? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY**
- They improved my child's reading
- They improved my child's writing
- They improved my child's craft skills
- They improved my child's speaking
- They made me feel closer to my child
- They improved my own reading skills
- They improved my own writing skills
- They gave me some ideas for activities I could do with my child
- They gave us a reason to spend more time together
- We talked to each other more
- I have not noticed any changes
- Other (please specify) _____

7) What changes, if any, have you noticed after participating in this course?_
PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- It helped me to understand how my child is taught in school
- It gave me more confidence to help my child with their schoolwork
- It made me feel closer to my child
- It made me feel more confident to come into school
- It made me feel more confident to talk to my child's teacher
- I am more able to talk and work with other parents
- I learned how to help my child with his/her homework
- It helped me improve my reading
- It helped me improve my writing
- I gained English/literacy qualifications
- It has increased my confidence in my own literacy skills
- I have made more friends
- I have built up my support network
- I have not noticed any changes
- Other (please specify) _____

SECTION B: ABOUT YOU AND YOUR CHILD

Please note questions in this section use 'your child' to refer to the Year 1 and/or Year 2 child who attends Family Literacy classes with you.

8) How often do YOU read each of the following? TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Every day	At least once a week	About once a month	Never or almost never
Books				
Newspapers				
Magazines				
Digital text on computers, e-readers or tablets				

9) The following statements are about reading. How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
I read only if I have to.				
I like talking about books with other people.				
I like to spend my spare time reading.				
I read only if I need information.				
Reading is an important activity in my home.				
Reading together with my child is an important part of the time we spend together.				

15) How much do you understand about how reading is taught at school?

- Nothing
- A bit
- Quite a lot

16) How much do you understand about how phonics is used to teach children to read?

- Nothing
- A bit
- Quite a lot

17) How often do you do the following with your child? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Every or almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Hardly ever	Never
Read a story book together					
Tell stories orally (without a book) to your child					
Write with your child (for example, letter games, a letter, a recipe etc)					
Help your child with spelling					
Help your child with phonics (letter sounds)					
Help your child with any reading or writing activities that they bring home from school					
Sing songs together					
Play rhyming or other language games					
Watch educational programmes on the TV or computer					
Play educational games on computer					
Listen to audio books					
Visit the library					
Borrow books from the library					

18) Who do you think is responsible for developing your child in the following areas? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Just the school	More school than parent/ carer	Both school and parent/ carer	More parent/ carer than school	Just the parent/ carer
Reading					
Writing					
Spelling					
Homework					
Exam/test results					
Behaviour					

19) The next set of statements is about reading books to or with your child (including e-books and stories on computer screen). How often do you personally do the following? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Every time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Ask your child questions about the book (or other reading text)				
Talk about a book with your child after you have read it				
Re-tell the story from the book you have read				
Ask your child to re-tell the story from the book you have read				
Re-read favourite books, chapters or pages				
Take turns reading aloud				

Many thanks for your help with this study.

Appendix 3: Parent interview schedules Time 1 and Time 2

PARENT INTERVIEW - PRE

For records

ID

Full name.....

Child's name.....

Child's school.....

Date of interview.....

Name of interviewer.....

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. If it is OK with you, then I would like to record our conversation ... it means we can keep the conversation flowing and I don't have to take notes. Is this OK?

In this interview, I want to find out a bit more about you, about your reading habits and your reasons for joining the family literacy class.

1. Can we talk a little bit more about what made you join the FL course? (Probe why, who told them about the course, if they had any hesitation about joining and if so, why)
- 2. How did you find out about the course?**
3. Have you been to any Family learning course before? When, why, what type of course?
- 4. How is the course going? What are the most enjoyable bits**
- 5. What are the most useful bits**
- 6. Is there anything about the course that you think could be improved?**
- 7. What do you (or are you hoping) hope to get out of the family literacy course? – probe for children and for self**
- 8. Have you got any personal goals? (if different from answer in Q7)**

9. What happens on the course? What do you do?

10. Do you have things from the course that you do at home? If so, what kinds of things – can you give me some examples? How long do you spend doing them each week? Is there a special time you do them?

11. Did you like reading as a child?

Do you remember if your parents or other people read to you?

12. How often do you read with your child? (probe for when, why, for how long)

You said in your survey that you [add detail of how often they read with child]. Can you tell me a bit more about what you read together, when, how long etc.?

13. Who does most of the reading with your child or children in your family?

You said in your survey that [other people read with child]. Can you tell me a bit more about this [with probes]? Probe why the people that read do the reading and why those who don't?

14. What kinds of literacy activities do you do with your child? (probe when, why, how)– e.g. telling stories, singing, playing games, shopping lists, pretend or real writing, playing 'going to the library'.

15. Are you and/or your child a member of your local library, any library? How often do you go there? Do you borrow books or read in the library?

16. Who in general helps with the reading and writing activities that your child brings from school (homework)? Why? Do you have any structure about when and how you do those with your child? How confident do you feel in helping your child with those activities?

17. How well do you understand how children are taught reading and writing in schools? Where did you get the information from?

18. How much 'regular' school homework does your son/daughter get each week? Can you say how many hours this amounts to? Is this too much, too little, about the right amount?

PARENT INTERVIEW – POST

For records

ID

Full name.....

Child's name.....

Child's school.....

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. Like last time I will be recording our conversation which means we can keep the conversation flowing and I don't have to take notes. I hope this is OK with you again?

We want to find out how the family literacy course that you attended at (venue) has affected you and your family.

A. Overview

1. Thinking back, how do you think the course went? Probe for adult only and joint sessions.
2. Did the course fulfil your expectations? GIVE EXAMPLES

B. Content

3. What kinds of things did you do on the course? Probe for adult only and joint sessions.
4. Did the tutor choose these for you or did you and the other parents have a say in them as well? [If yes, ask for details] GIVE EXAMPLES
5. What were the most enjoyable things about the course? For yourself and your child? Probe for adult only and joint sessions.
6. What were the most useful things about the course? – useful for yourself and useful for your child? Probe for adult only and joint sessions.
7. What was the most difficult thing that you found on the course? Probe for adult only and joint sessions.
8. How well did the tutor explain the activities/games you made?
9. How well did the tutor work with the adults and how well with the children? (emphasise confidentiality)

10. Did you know what you were supposed to do at home with your child? Was this made clear to you? ELABORATE
11. What kinds of things did you do **at home** that you had learned on the course?
12. Have you used any of the games/activities that you have been making in your FL class?
13. How long did you spend doing these activities/games with your child each week?
14. Do you have a 'special' time for these activities and games? Do you regard this as a 'special' time in any way?
15. How could the family literacy course be improved?
- 16. Do you think the course was of more benefit for your child's reading or their writing or was it for both areas?**
17. Have you noticed any changes in the following in
 - a. reading and writing or other literacy activities?
 - b. [If Yes, ask: what kinds of things do you do?] GIVE EXAMPLES
18. Are you continuing to do more with your child at home?
 - a. [If yes, ask for details] – what kinds of things
19. How much did you learn about WHAT and HOW the school teaches your child?
- 20. Do you think your own reading and/or writing habits have changed since you the course? [IF YES] In what ways?**
21. And do you think you changed in yourself in any way (maybe more/less confident etc)? Probe for
 - a. Become more involved in your child's school
 - b. Talking to teachers more
 - c. Want to apply to take another course
22. Has anything changed in your family since the course? (E.g., **relationships with your children** and/or partner, helping your children more with school work)GIVE EXAMPLES
23. Has your child changed in any way since the course began? If so, how?
24. Do you intend to carry on with the things you learned from the FL course? (i.e. playing some of the games, more reading and writing

Appendix 4: The tutor questionnaire

Family Literacy Study

Tutor Questionnaire

Dear Tutor

Thank you for all your help with the Family Literacy Study which we are carrying out at the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC), Institute of Education (IOE), University of London.

We would like to invite you to complete this questionnaire about the Family Literacy/Family English course we have been following in our study. It will help us find out more about you and about your teaching.

Participation in this research is voluntary and all answers are completely confidential. All the data will be anonymised at the analysis stage and all names will be used only for data matching.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions and many thanks for your support.

Best wishes,

Jon Swain, J.Swain@ioe.ac.uk
Olga Cara, O.Cara@ioe.ac.uk
(Research officers)
www.nrdc.org.uk | www.ioe.ac.uk

Screening question

1) Which learners did you personally teach on the Family Literacy/English course? PLEASE CHECK ONE BOX

- Only adult learners GO TO Q.2
- Only child learners SCREEN OUT
- Both adults and children GO TO Q.2

General info

2) Please fill in:

Your full name: _____

Title of the Family Literacy/English course: _____

Name of school the course was taught at:

Section A: About You

3) Are you?

- Male
- Female

4) To which of the ethnic groups in this list do you consider you belong to? PLEASE CHECK ONE BOX

White

- White British
- Any other White (please specify) _____

Asian / Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian

Black / Black British

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black

Chinese

Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups (e.g. White and Black African, White and Asian)

Any other ethnic group (please specify) _____

5) What is your age (in years)? _____

6) What is your highest teaching qualification? PLEASE CHECK ONE BOX

- PGCE or Cert Ed in primary education (GO TO Q.8)
- PGCE or Cert Ed in secondary education (GO TO Q.8)
- PGCE or Cert Ed in post-compulsory education (GO TO Q.8)
- PGCE or Cert Ed in ESOL, EFL, or ESL (GO TO Q.8)
- Any other PGCE or Cert Ed qualification (please specify)..... (GO TO Q.8)
- BEd in primary education (GO TO Q.8)
- BEd in secondary education (GO TO Q.8)
- BEd in post-compulsory education (GO TO Q.8)
- Any other BEd qualification (please specify)..... (GO TO Q.8)
- Any other teaching qualification (please specify)..... (GO TO Q.8)
- No teaching qualification (GO TO Q.7)

7) What is your highest educational qualification? PLEASE CHECK ONE BOX

- No educational qualifications
 - An entry level qualification
 - Level 1 (e.g. GCSE (grade D or E) or BTEC Introductory Diploma)
 - Level 2 (e.g. GCSE (grade C or above) or 'O' Level or BTEC First Diploma)
 - Level 3 (e.g. 'A' or 'AS' level or BTEC National Diploma or Extended Certificate)
 - Level 4 (e.g. Certificate of Higher Education)
 - Level 5 (e.g. Diploma of Higher Education or Foundation degree)
 - Level 6 (e.g. Bachelor degree, graduate certificates and diplomas; BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards)
 - Level 7 and above (e.g. MA, PhD, PGCE or Advanced professional awards, certificates and diplomas)
 - Overseas qualification
 - Other (please state):
-

8) Do you have a qualification in teaching adult literacy/English?

- Yes. Please specify your highest qualification in teaching adult literacy/English
_____ GO TO Q.10
- No, I do not have a qualification in teaching adult literacy/English GO TO Q.9

9) What is your highest qualification in English? PLEASE CHECK ONE BOX

- Entry level qualification
- GCSE at grade D-G, a CSE 2 or under
- GCSE at grade A*-C, a GCE O Level, CSE Grade 1

- A- or AS-level
- A degree or postgraduate level qualification
- Other qualification, level not known
- A qualification in English gained outside the UK
- No formal qualifications in English

10)Have you had specific training in teaching Family Literacy/English or Family Learning?

- Yes GO TO Q.11
- No GO TO Q.12

11)Approximately how many hours in total have you had of specific training in teaching Family Literacy/English or Family Learning?

_____ hours

Section B: About the course

The next questions ask you about the Family Literacy/English course you taught at school during the research.

12)Please complete this question about the course scheduling.

	Total number of sessions	Total number of hours	Total number of weeks
Adults-only sessions			
Children-only sessions			
Joint sessions with adults and children			
Whole Family Literacy course			

13)Please describe briefly the usual set up of weekly sessions? (e.g. separate adult only sessions for the first hour and then children join for another hour)

14) Please complete this question about the parent and child learners on the Family Literacy/English Course.

	Parent(s)	Child(ren)
Number who enrolled on the course		
Number who completed the course		
Number of females		
Number of males		
Number with English as an Additional Language		
Number who were entered for national qualifications in English		

15) How would you describe the teaching environment? (Please check one option in each row)

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Physical environment (e.g. room, lighting)	()	()	()	()	()
Teaching materials and resources	()	()	()	()	()
Interactive and digital resources (e.g. computers, laptops, internet)	()	()	()	()	()
Collaboration with colleagues from school	()	()	()	()	()
Attitude of your main point of contact in school	()	()	()	()	()
Attitudes of parents on course	()	()	()	()	()

16) Were crèche facilities provided during class time?

- () Yes
- () No

17) To what extent do you link your work on the Family Literacy/English course to the school curriculum?

- () All my work on the course is linked to the school curriculum
- () Most of my work on the course is linked to the school curriculum
- () Some of my work on the course is linked to the school curriculum
- () I do not link my work on the course to the school curriculum

18) Do you follow a curriculum or scheme of work?

- () Yes GO TO Q.19
- () No GO TO Q.21

19) Which of these statements best describes your role in the design of the scheme of work (SoW)

- I designed the SoW myself
- I had a major input into the design of the SoW
- I had a moderate input into the design of the SoW
- I had a minimal input into the design of the SoW
- I had no input into the design of the SoW

20) Do you and children's tutor on the family literacy/English course follow a joint curriculum or scheme of work?

- Yes
- No
- There is no separate children's tutor

21) How often do you liaise with the Year 1/Year 2 class teacher(s) about the Family Literacy/English course?

- We liaise at least once a week
- We liaise about every two weeks
- We liaise a few times during the programme/course
- We hardly ever liaise
- We never liaise

22) How often do you liaise with the teacher of the child-only sessions on the Family Literacy/English course?

- We liaise at least once a week
- We liaise about every two weeks
- We liaise a few times during the programme/course
- We hardly ever liaise
- We never liaise
- There is no separate children's tutor

23) How much say do parent/carers have in the activities that they work on in the adult-only sessions?

- A lot
- Some
- Not much
- None

24)How often do parent/carers work in the following ways in the adult-only sessions? (Please check one option in each row)

	All the time	Most sessions	Some sessions	A few sessions	Not at all
in groups or pairs on the same activity	()	()	()	()	()
in groups or pairs on different activities	()	()	()	()	()
individually on the same activity	()	()	()	()	()
individually on different activities	()	()	()	()	()

25)Approximately what proportion of the course do the parent/carers spend on the following areas of literacy?

Please include both the adult only and the joint sessions in your estimates. Your answers should add up to 100% in total.

Speaking and Listening _____%

Reading _____%

Writing _____%

Other _____%

26)Which teaching approaches have you used in the family literacy/English programme, to help adults to understand the development of children's literacy skills? (Please check all that apply)

- () Vocabulary-building games and rhymes
- () Story telling
- () Reading with 'Big' books
- () Modelling reading with children (e.g. asking about illustrations, predicting etc)
- () Singing the alphabet
- () Writing stories
- () Making a story box
- () Playing games about different word types (nouns, verbs, connectives, etc)
- () Activities about synthetic phonics
- () Other approaches (please describe briefly)_____

27)Do you ask parents to work at home with their children on the activities created in class? PLEASE CHECK ONE BOX

- Yes, after every session
- Yes, after most sessions
- Yes, after some sessions
- No

28)Are adults' literacy skills assessed?

- Yes, at the beginning and at the end of the course GO TO Q. 29
- Yes, at the beginning of the course only GO TO Q. 29
- Yes, at the end of the course only GO TO Q. 29
- No, adults' literacy skills are not assessed GO TO Q. 30

29)What assessment tools do you use? (Please check all that apply)

- Commercial tests (please specify)_____
- In-house developed tests
- Other (please describe briefly)_____

30)In your opinion, which three factors were most important to the success of the Family Literacy/English course?

31)In your opinion, what were the three greatest challenges to the success of the Family Literacy/English course?

Appendix 5: Further details about the process of carrying out classroom observations

Both researchers observed family literacy classes: one attended one session from eight programmes, while the other researcher enrolled on a programme with her own son.

A summary of the nine observed classes appears at the end of this section (Table A5.1). The physical accommodation was judged by researchers to be ‘very good’ at six of the schools and ‘good’⁵⁸ at the other three. Four of the schools provided parents with a dedicated room, three courses were held in dining halls (but were not noisy), one was held in the school library, and another in a Year 5 classroom. The dedicated rooms not only had adult-sized chairs but also tea/coffee-making facilities and a sink to wash cups. In every setting parents had the chance to make a hot drink, by using the staff kitchens. Only two of the nine schools provided a crèche (although X of the 27 in the wider study did).

The average number of parents on the register was nine per course, and the average number attending the observed session was six⁵⁹. All 58 parents in the observed sessions observed were women, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. In six of the nine courses, White British learners were in a minority (less than 50%); however, of the 15 tutors and KS1 Teachers who were observed, 13 were White British.

Only four of the nine courses offered discrete provision for children, ranging from 30 minutes per session (or 5 hours in total) to 1.25 hours per session (or 12.5 hours in total).

In seven of nine programmes, parents were not working towards gaining accreditations (only five of the 27 courses in the wider study offered accreditation).. In one programme (No. 9 in Table A5.1) six out of the eight parents were taking a City and Guilds Themed Award in Reading at Level 1. The tutor estimated that it took about three to four hours of course time, and the parents said they were quite happy to take it. On the other programme (No. 8), the parents were taking a Functional Skills English Test at Entry Level. These parents had three practice papers, which they did at home, and then spent one three-hour session doing some writing practice and Speaking and Listening activities. 10 out of the 11 parents were taking the test, and three who were interviewed stated that they were encouraged to enrol at the local Further Education College and take further FS tests at higher levels.

⁵⁸These categories were chosen from a range of Very Good, Good, Satisfactory and Poor.

⁵⁹This number has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table A5.1: Summary of researchers' observations

Programme Number	Date of visit Sessions visited	Children's year group(s)	Structure of course	Length of joint session – contact time	Discrete provision for children	Number of parents on register (number present in session observed)	Parents working towards qualifications?	Quality of accommodation	Crèche
1	November 2013 Parent and Joint	Y1 and Y2	30 hours 10 weeks, 3 hours a session 9.00 – 12.00	45 mins 7.5 hours in total	No	10 (8)	No	Very good	Yes
2	November 2013 Parent and Joint	Y1 and Y2	30 hours 10 weeks, 3 hours a session 9.00 – 12.00	60 mins 10 hours in total	No	8 (3)	No	Good	Yes
3	January-April 2014 Parent and Joint	R and Y1	22.5 hours 10 weeks 9.15-11.30 2 hours 15 min per session 1 hour 15 min parents only 1 hour children and parents	60 min	No	2-7 *	No	Very good	No
4	March 2014 Parent and Joint	Y1 and Y2	30 hours: 20 hours contact, plus 10 hours home study 10 weeks, 2 hours per session 2.15-4.15	45 mins 7.5 hours in total	No	8 (6)	No	Good	No
5	March 2014 Parent and Joint	Y1 and Y2	30 hours: 20 hours contact, plus 10 hours home study 10 weeks, 2 hours per session 2.00-4.00	45 mins 7.5 hours in total	No	8 (5)	No	Very good	No
6	March 2014 Parent and Joint	Y1 and Y2	60 hours 10 weeks, 2 hours a day, 3 days a week)	2 hour a week 20 hours in total	2 hours a week 20 hours in total	10 (4)	Yes	Very good	Yes
7	July 2014 Parent and Joint	Y1 and Y2	22.5 hours** 10 weeks 2.5 hours per session 9.00-11.30	1.5 hour 15 hours in total	45 mins 7.5 hours in total	8 (6)	No	Good	No
8	July 2014 Parent and Children	R and Y1	30 hours 10 weeks 3 hours per session This included 6 hours for exam practice 9.00-12.00	30 mins 5 hours in total	1.25 hours per session 12.25 hours in total	11 (10)	Yes	Very good	Yes
9	November 2014 Parent, Children and Joint	Y1	30 hours 10 weeks 3 hours per session 9.00-12.00	60 minutes 10 hours in total	Yes: 30 minutes, taught by Y1 teacher in school 5 hours in total	8 (7)	Yes	Very good	No

Key: -

** The researcher took part in this course with her son and so the numbers indicate the range of parents attending over the whole course*

*** One session of this course was cancelled*

R = Reception age (4-5 years old)

Y1 = Year 1 (5-6 years old)

Y2 = Year 2 (6-7 years old)

Appendix 6: Parents' highest qualification and their motivations for joining the course in relation to their age, highest qualification and home language

Table A6.1: Parents' highest educational qualification

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No educational qualifications	30	16	16
An Entry level qualification	15	8	24
Level 1 (e.g. GCSE [grade D or E] or BTEC Introductory Diploma)	16	8	32
Level 2 (e.g. GCSE (grade C or above) or 'O' Level or BTEC First Diploma)	27	14	46
Level 3 (e.g. 'A' or 'AS' level or BTEC National Diploma or Extended Certificate)	29	15	61
Level 4 (e.g. Certificate of Higher Education)	8	4	65
Level 5 (e.g. Diploma of Higher Education or Foundation degree)	10	5	70
Level 6 (e.g. Bachelor degree, graduate certificates and diplomas; BTEC Advanced)	23	12	82
Level 7 and above (e.g. MA, PhD, PGCE or Advanced professional awards, certificates and diplomas)	7	3	85
Overseas qualification	28	15	100.0
Total	193	100.0	
Missing data	9		

Table A6.2: Age of parents and their motivations to join the course

		Age group					Total
		25 and below	26-30	31-40	41-50	Over 50	
To learn how the school teaches my child to read and write.	Count	2	22	67	24	4	119
	% within Age group	100.0%	75.9%	77.0%	85.7%	100.0%	
To learn how to help my child with his/her homework.	Count	1	25	67	25	4	122
	% within Age group	50.0%	86.2%	77.0%	89.3%	100.0%	
To be more involved in my child's school life and education.	Count	2	21	68	26	4	121
	% within Age group	100.0%	72.4%	78.2%	92.9%	100.0%	
To improve my own reading.	Count	0	7	29	9	2	47
	% within Age group	0.0%	24.1%	33.3%	32.1%	50.0%	
To improve my own writing.	Count	0	7	26	10	2	45
	% within Age group	0.0%	24.1%	29.9%	35.7%	50.0%	

To gain literacy qualifications.	Count	0	9	22	5	1	37
	% within Age group	0.0%	31.0%	25.3%	17.9%	25.0%	
To increase my confidence in helping my child with his/her schoolwork.	Count	2	24	51	20	4	101
	% within Age group	100.0%	82.8%	58.6%	71.4%	100.0%	
To increase my confidence in my own literacy skills.	Count	0	10	38	15	3	66
	% within Age group	0.0%	34.5%	43.7%	53.6%	75.0%	
Other	Count	0	0	4	2	0	6
	% within Age group	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	7.1%	0.0%	
Total	Count	2	29	87	28	4	150

Table A6.3: Parental qualifications and motivations to join the course

Why did you join this Family Literacy class?		Qualifications						Total
		No educational qualifications	L1 or below	L2	L3 or L4 or L5	L6 and above	Overseas qualifications	
To learn how the school teaches my child to read and write.	Count	16	17	19	38	20	20	130
	% within Qualifications	61.5%	68.0%	86.4%	86.4%	80.0%	80.0%	
To learn how to help my child with his/her homework.	Count	23	20	17	37	17	22	136
	% within Qualifications	88.5%	80.0%	77.3%	84.1%	68.0%	88.0%	
To be more involved in my child's school life and education.	Count	20	14	16	39	21	21	131
	% within Qualifications	76.9%	56.0%	72.7%	88.6%	84.0%	84.0%	
To improve my own reading.	Count	12	12	5	7	2	17	55
	% within Qualifications	46.2%	48.0%	22.7%	15.9%	8.0%	68.0%	
To improve my own writing.	Count	13	10	4	6	1	16	50
	% within Qualifications	50.0%	40.0%	18.2%	13.6%	4.0%	64.0%	
To gain literacy qualifications.	Count	8	7	2	7	1	15	40
	% within Qualifications	30.8%	28.0%	9.1%	15.9%	4.0%	60.0%	
To increase my confidence in helping my child with his/her schoolwork.	Count	20	13	15	30	11	22	111
	% within Qualifications	76.9%	52.0%	68.2%	68.2%	44.0%	88.0%	

To increase my confidence in my own literacy skills.	Count	17	14	5	16	5	18	75
	% within Qualifications	65.4%	56.0%	22.7%	36.4%	20.0%	72.0%	
Other	Count	0	0	2	2	1	4	9
	% within Qualifications	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	4.5%	4.0%	16.0%	
Total	Count	26	25	22	44	25	25	167

Table A6.4: Main home language and motivations to join the course

		Main language spoken with child at home		Total
		Other	English	
Why did you join this Family Literacy class? To learn how the school teaches my child to read and write.	Count	31	105	136
	% within Language group	73.8%	80.2%	
To learn how to help my child with his/her homework.	Count	35	106	141
	% within Language group	83.3%	80.9%	
To be more involved in my child's school life and education.	Count	30	107	137
	% within Language group	71.4%	81.7%	
To improve my own reading.	Count	28	28	56
	% within Language group	66.7%	21.4%	
To improve my own writing.	Count	26	26	52
	% within Language group	61.9%	19.8%	
To gain literacy qualifications.	Count	20	21	41
	% within Language group	47.6%	16.0%	
To increase my confidence in helping my child with his/her schoolwork.	Count	31	86	117
	% within Language group	73.8%	65.6%	
To increase my confidence in my own literacy skills.	Count	25	53	78
	% within Language group	59.5%	40.5%	
Other	Count	3	6	9
	% within Language group	7.1%	4.6%	
Total	Count	42	131	173

Appendix 7: Changes noticed by parents as a result of the course and from playing family literacy games

Table A7.1: What changes, if any, have you noticed after participating in this course?

	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
It helped me to understand how my child is taught in school	125	12.7%	94.0%
I learned how to help my child with his/her homework	109	11.0%	82.0%
It gave me more confidence to help my child with their schoolwork	104	10.5%	78.2%
I have made more friends	87	8.8%	65.4%
I am more able to talk and work with other parents	80	8.1%	60.2%
It made me feel closer to my child	79	8.0%	59.4%
It made me feel more confident to come into school	75	7.6%	56.4%
It made me feel more confident to talk to my child's teacher	68	6.9%	51.1%
It has increased my confidence in my own literacy skills	71	7.2%	53.4%
It helped me improve my writing	58	5.9%	43.6%
It helped me improve my reading	56	5.7%	42.1%
I have built up my support network	47	4.8%	35.3%
I gained English/literacy qualifications	26	2.6%	19.5%
I have not noticed any changes	1	0.1%	0.8%
Other	1	0.1%	0.8%
TOTAL	987	100.0%	742.1%

Table A7.2: What changes, if any, have you noticed after playing the games/activities with your child?

	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
They gave me some ideas for activities I could do with my child	109	14.1%	82.6%
They improved my child's reading	97	12.5%	73.5%
They gave us a reason to spend more time together	97	12.5%	73.5%
They made me feel closer to my child	83	10.7%	62.9%
We talked to each other more	77	10.0%	58.3%
They improved my child's writing	74	9.6%	56.1%
They improved my child's craft skills	61	7.9%	46.2%
They improved my own reading skills	58	7.5%	43.9%
They improved my own writing skills	56	7.2%	42.4%
They improved my child's speaking	53	6.9%	40.2%
I have not noticed any changes	1	0.1%	0.8%
Other	7	0.9%	5.3%
TOTAL	773	100.0%	585.6%

Appendix 8: Further information about family literacy programmes: the curriculum

The curriculum

Data from the tutors' questionnaire showed that the titles of the courses in our sample varied considerably; however, the most common name was 'family literacy' (11), followed by 'Family English' (4).

Courses were partly tailored for the particular group of parents. For instance, on courses where the majority of the parents had English as their additional language, the tutor would do lots of language work – vocabulary and a greater emphasis on simple technical terms (e.g. verb, adjective).

Twenty-two of the 27 courses assessed parents' literacy skills, either both at the beginning and end (12), or towards the start of the course only (10), and over three-quarters of the tests were developed in-house. On two of the courses the parents' literacy skills appear not to have been measured. Only five out of the 27 programmes evaluated offered parents opportunities to gain national qualifications; the reasons for this are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3⁶⁰.

Tutors on 24 of the 25, where we had information available, courses followed a pre-planned SoW, which delineated the course content on a weekly basis, and which they produced themselves (14) or at least had a major input (10) in its design. Where there was discrete provision for children, tutors and KS1 teachers followed the same curriculum from a joint SoW.

Table A8.1 below delineates the areas or topics of teaching and learning that were set out in the 20 SoWs.

Some of the headings have a letter (S) at the end of them. This is an attempt to note those areas that were also taught in the school, and which tutors were making deliberate links to. In this way, parents could find out what KS1 teachers used to teach literacy in the school, and how, which they could transfer and use in the HLE. This annotation was intended to be an analytical device to show which areas/topics were the most commonly or frequently covered and taught. However, just because an area/topic was *not* mentioned on the SoW it does not

⁶⁰Chapter 3 reminds us that relatively few courses were able to draw on the Adult Skills Budget (ASB) and so were not concerned with offering the chance to gain qualifications.

necessarily mean that it was not included as part of the programme. For instance, Independent Learning Plans (ILPs) only appeared in 11 SoWs, but were an integral part of every programme; they might be included elsewhere in the programme guidance, or were carried out as part of the parents' initial assessment⁶¹.

Table A8.1: Areas of teaching and learning outlined in the Schemes of Work from 20 family literacy programmes

Area or topic of teaching and learning	Number of times cited in the 20 SoWs analysed
Generic focuses (5)	
Expectations and agreement of ground rules (e.g. tolerance, respect for each other)	9
ILPs	11
Taking national tests	5
End of course celebrations, including certificates	27
Specific link to learning about school literacies included in the course aims	11
Particular focuses (12)	
Parents' own learning experiences	3
Parents' own interests	3
Importance of parents as role models	5
Importance of speaking and listening	9
Importance of observation skills	1
Importance of parental involvement in learning	5
Importance of role play	1
Importance of using positive language	2
Creating a supportive home literacy environment	1
Learning styles	6
Learning/study skills	1
Opportunities for using literacy in the environment	1
General activities (13)	
Improving speaking and listening skills	6
Building vocabulary	1
Visits outside the classroom	9
Making and playing games	13
Using the internet	1
Links to the internet for resources	2
Using newspapers	1
Quizzes	12
Drama (including role play)	3
Using puppets/[props	7
Creating a story box	3
Use of singing/songs	1
Making books or magazines	4
Ways of supporting children in reading (14)	

⁶¹An ILP in some form is essential as the learner's distance travelled has to be assessed at the end of the course and individual learning goals, as well as those of the group, have to be recorded. It is also the baseline from which progression is identified and measured.

General strategies	16
Telling and re-telling stories	8
Choosing books	7
Bedtime reading	1
Picture books (S)	3
Use of rhyme (S)	5
Blending sounds (S)	4
Phonics (S)	15
Synthetic phonics (S)	3
Syllables (S)	3
Modelling reading	3
Asking questions about the text	5
Comprehension	1
New technologies for reading	2
Ways of supporting children with writing(24)	
Letter formation (S)	3
Sentence construction	10
Spelling strategies (S)	12
Lists of high frequency words (S)	1
CVC words (consonant-vowel-consonant) e.g. cat (S)	4
Using dictionaries (S)	1
Writing stories (S)	3
Writing plays (S)	1
Writing poems (S)	5
Writing letters (S)	5
Characterisation	3
Following instructions, e.g. writing recipes (S)	8
Persuasive writing, e.g. writing advertisements (S)	2
Punctuation (S)	9
Grammar (S)	4
Phonemes, graphemes (S)	7
Parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs (S)	11
Conjunctions and/or connectives (S)	5
Prefixes, suffixes (S)	4
Grammar (S)	4
Homophones (S)	6
Genres (particularly fact and fiction) (S)	8
Tenses (S)	1
Sequencing (S)	4
Links to schools (3)	
Watching a DVD showing a KS1 English lesson	2
Visit to aKS1 English lesson in school	1
Looking at school reading scheme books	1
Total of different areas or topics	71

The 20 SoWs contained an enormous number of areas of teaching and learning – 71 in total – although some headings rely on the individual subjectivities and interpretations of the researchers and could be regarded as subheadings of others. For example, ‘comprehension’ might be part of ‘asking questions about the text’, or ‘phonemes and graphemes’ could be placed just as well under reading as under writing. Despite these caveats, we believe the exercise of

highlighted the most common areas of teaching and learning was still informative and useful.

It is important to note that the SoWs covered the parents-only and joint sessions, and so headings such as 'punctuation' or 'strategies for spelling' may refer to work taught to the parents, children or both. Other headings such as 'Importance of parents as role models' are more obviously aimed at the adults. Generally though, tutors aimed the work in the parents' session at the level of the parents themselves. For instance, when teaching a topic like 'strategies for spelling', observations typically showed the tutor demonstrating how the school taught children to learn spellings (perhaps by using the technique of LOOK, WRITE, COVER, CHECK), and then asking parents to use and practise this method to learn spellings of words at their own level.

In analysis, we divided the SoWs into six sections: generic focuses, particular focuses, general activities, ways of supporting children in reading, ways of supporting children in writing, and links to the school.

Generic focuses

These showed that many programmes began the first session with a discussion of the course outline, learners' expectations and ground rules that parents were asked to abide by, such as showing tolerance and respect for differing opinions. Just over half of the courses (11) specifically stated that they asked learners to maintain ILPs and all of the nine sessions that researchers observed ended with parents completing a short written evaluation of the session. The same number of courses made specific links to school literacies in their aims and objectives. All the courses ended with some form of celebration: this frequently included parents bringing in food and drink, and both parents and children receiving certificates. Sometimes achievements were also highlighted in school assemblies.

Particular focuses

The particular focuses of each course showed greater diversity. The most commonly taught area seemed to be speaking and listening, which corresponds to the pattern outlined by the tutors. There was also mention of the important role parents play in their children's education, including them having a greater involvement in schools and acting as literacy models. There was also relatively greater prominence given to the importance of recognising different learning styles. However, it was noticeable how few references there were to the parents' own interests and skills and using practices from their own cultures. The

researchers did not see this happening during the visits, and their fieldnotes show that the work was almost entirely tutor-directed, a point confirmed by parents who were interviewed. However, it needs to be pointed out that 8/9 visits by researchers were snapshots of provision and only 8/28 parents made comments on this during the Time 2 interviews.

Ways of supporting children in reading

Learning about new strategies that support reading was a key part of almost every course that we analysed. One of the main aims of the courses was to explain and show parents how reading is approached in schools (such as an explanation of phonics and how it is taught – but specifically synthetic phonics only appeared in three SoWs), and also to give them greater knowledge, skills and strategies to use at home. Another main aim was to make the joint reading experience between parent and child enjoyable.

Analysis of the SoWs also showed that the ways of choosing books (including who should have choice) and the technique of telling and re-telling stories (involving both parent and child) featured prominently in family literacy courses. It was interesting perhaps that ‘new technologies in reading’ were only mentioned twice. This is despite the frequent mentions during the interviews of children using tablets (e.g. iPads)⁶².

Ways of supporting children with writing

There were 24 separate headings in the SoWs connected to supporting children with their writing. The three most common activities appeared to be looking at how the school teaches spellings, which were a regular part of weekly school homework; how sentences are constructed for meaning, using knowledge of grammar and a range of punctuation; and the identification and use of parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. As we have already written, tutors often set work at the parents’ own level and then parents worked on the particular area/topic with their children in the joint session and at home, teaching skills at the children’s own level, often through games that the tutor had explained during the parents’ session.

Other frequently mentioned activities were looking at different genres of writing, particularly fact and fiction, the use of homophones, and following and writing a set of instructions. A particularly popular activity was writing recipes, both real and imaginary.

⁶²However, there were no references to Kindles or equivalent technologies in the interviews.

Appendix 9: Cohen's d effect size formula and references

There is a range of possible approaches when determining an effect size, of which 'Cohen's d ' (Cohen, 1988: 20; Cohen et al., 2007: 521) is the established and most commonly-used method. The usual formula for it is:

Mean gain of group 1 – mean gain of group 2

$$d = \frac{\text{Mean gain of group 1} - \text{Mean gain of group 2}}{s}$$

where s = the pooled post-test standard deviation; the formula for that is:

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)s_2^2}{n_1 + n_2}},$$

(Hartung et al., 2008)

where n_1 and n_2 are the sample sizes of the intervention and control groups respectively, and s_1 and s_2 are their post-test s.d's.

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