

HASTINGS OPPORTUNITY AREA (HOA)

SYNTHESIS REPORT

(YEAR 1 – YEAR 4)

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Five Key Messages of the HOA Programme Evaluation

- A place-based approach is critical in being flexible and responsive to the needs of the local community. The HOA benefited from implementing a place-based approach that included team members with significant knowledge of and lived experience in the local community.
- The evaluation of the HOA programme highlights that building relationships at all levels of a local system (e.g., in the partnership board, in the HOA delivery team, in schools and colleges) and between diverse members of the community (e.g., parents/carers, practitioners, services, and school staff, between MATs) is an important vehicle of successful system change. This has been a strong aspect of the HOA programme and has resulted in emerging system change, such as using the Mathematics Mastery approach in teaching and learning about maths.
- Listening to the voices of pupils, parents/carers, and school staff about their needs, and having control of how they utilise funding, builds trust between members of the wider Hastings community. The importance of school independence and freedom in producing and implementing projects, cannot be overstated.
- While the HOA has shown success in improving outcomes for pupils across all priorities, persistent challenges remain. These are: staff retention, school staff capacity, and staff turnover.
- The HOA has implemented and embedded sustainable approaches to teaching and learning across maths and literacy, it has also provided more mental health support and enrichment opportunities for pupils. However, across these priorities the HOA has also relied on externally funded and delivered projects/ resources. This impacts the sustainability of progress, as funding is necessary to continue engagement. This will not be possible for all schools, and it is necessary for future programmes to consider the limitations of including such projects in the context of limited and competitive funding opportunities.

Executive Summary

The Department for Education (DfE) Opportunity Areas (OA) programme aims to improve the life chances of children and young people facing multiple social and economic disadvantages through supporting whole town and place-based programmes in 12 local areas. Hastings is one of these 12 local areas and the focus of this report. In the Hastings Opportunity Area (HOA) the priorities to improve social mobility were maths, literacy, mental health, and enrichment opportunities.

This report presents the findings of an independent evaluation, aiming to understand and evaluate HOA's implementation (delivery), its observed and perceived outcomes (progress) and its successes and challenges (system) during the first four years of the programme. It also presents evaluation findings regarding the sustainability and legacy of the HOA programme. Three research questions guided this evaluation study.

- 1) What has the HOA done towards meeting its original delivery goals?
- 2) What progress/perceived progress has the HOA made?
- 3) What were the successes and challenges of the HOA programme?

Using a qualitative approach, we implemented a multi-method and multi-informant design between April and July 2022, utilising data from published and unpublished programme reports, seven interviews, and one focus group.

Key Insights for Future Implementation:

Delivery:

- The HOA programme evidenced mostly successful delivery across all priorities based on original targets set at the beginning of the programme.
- The collaboration between schools, community organisations and the HOA local delivery team was key to the success of programme delivery.
- Projects delivered were broad and varied, befitting the complex and place-based intervention programmes.
- Projects across HOA priorities and programme years targeted 4 to 25 years of age with a particular focus on Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils (age range 8-14 years).
- Delivery adapted well to Covid-19, utilising hybrid ways of working where necessary.
- Flexible ownership and not following a prescribed model meant significant investment is needed in quality assurance/ control and risk management/ assessment procedures.

Perceived Progress:

- Prior to Covid-19 disruption to implementation and data collection, there was evidence of positive pupil outcomes across all key priorities including maths and literacy achievements, improvement in positive mental health outcomes, empowerment in relation to active engagement with enrichment activities and increased attendance.
- Good progress was still made during Covid-19 across priorities, despite some projects stalling.
- The HOA local delivery team provided a rapid and comprehensive response to Covid-19, particularly in comparison to national actions.

- Key mechanisms of good progress have been flexibility, adaptability, and building strong relationships with creating active learning spaces that promote innovation and creativity.
- Staff training, practice development, and capacity building across Hastings enabled development of a shared language that promotes a sense of collective ownership of the HOA and the confidence and competence of practitioners to deliver the HOA projects.
- The HOA's reliance on local capacity building and human capital resulted in poor staff retention becoming a significant threat to HOA's progress and impact.
- The flexible and bespoke nature of the HOA projects increased the importance of clear communication across stakeholders (staff, practitioners, parents) and a clear understanding of how projects are beneficial and delivered.

System Change:

- Mechanisms of successful systems change involved collaboration, consultation, multi-partnership working, holism, evidence-based approaches, building capacity, building trust in relationships, and consistent communication.
- Mechanisms for potential success included the need for stronger marketing and branding, ensuring that the implementation process is transparent, being persistent in building trust and embedding practice, early external evaluation, more voice and empowerment of pupils, and more time to embed practice.

Sustainability:

- HOA has made significant and lasting change across Hastings in terms of building relationships, networks, and partnerships across schools and across community organisations.
- Schools have made lasting pedagogical change, particularly in the maths and literacy priorities where there have been significant training, resource and guidance provided.
- Staff retention and quick turnover is still a large issue for Hastings schools and could threaten the sustainability of training/ learning cascades.
- HOA programme projects can be expensive, and this means that schools may not be able to afford the continuation of some projects.

Introduction

In their report, 'State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain', the Social Mobility Commission (TSMC) defined social mobility as "...an individual's ability to build a good life for themselves, regardless of their background. The more social mobility there is, the less someone's destination in life depends on where they start out." (TSMC, 2016, p.1).¹ Social mobility is therefore about ensuring everyone has equal and fair opportunity to have a good life, in the present and the future. Opportunity Areas (OAs) were created to improve life outcomes in geographical areas where social mobility indicators are the lowest in the country.

The initial vision of the OA's, conceived by the Department for Education (DfE), was to break down barriers to social mobility, to ensure all pupils have equal opportunity to reach their fullest potential. In utilising a "place-based approach" (DfE, 2017)² that encouraged improvements in education, supported the building of skills and increased training opportunities, OAs would ensure that "no one is left behind" (DfE, 2017). Place-based approaches target specific locations and focus on the broader issues and conditions that can impact a person's life, e.g., individual, family and community level challenges. Place-based approaches are advantageous as they are tailored to the strengths and needs of the area and are delivered by multiple organisations using the same funding, often with the same goal (Burgemeister et al., 2021).³ Therefore, they can provide 'wraparound' support for communities and individuals experiencing a constellation of disadvantages and barriers to positive outcomes (Hart, Hall & Henwood, 2003),⁴ which often occur in connection with each other at the same time.

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the Hastings Opportunity Area (HOA) programme as a whole town, place-based approach. This involves capturing understanding in relation to its implementation (delivery), its observed and perceived outcomes (progress) and its successes and challenges (system). The report also outlines findings in relation to sustainability and legacy of the HOA. Key learning points identified through the evaluation are highlighted as a contribution to the effectiveness and legacy of this and other place-based approaches.

Hastings Local Context

Hastings was identified as an OA, using the Social Mobility Commission's 'Social Mobility Index'. The DfE and HOA Partnership Board identified barriers to social mobility in Hastings, especially in relation to schools, such as:

- poor literacy rates and low maths achievement across all Key Stages (KSs)
- high levels of staff turnover
- high levels of mental health concerns
- concerns over persistent absence and poor attendance rates
- low aspirations in terms of A-level and university engagement

¹ The Social Mobility Commission (2016). Social mobility in the UK: state of the nation 2016 report. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2016>

² Department for Education (2017) HOA Delivery Plan. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas>

³ Burgemeister, F. C., Crawford, S. B., Hackworth, N. J., Hokke, S., & Nicholson, J. M. (2021). Place-based approaches to improve health and development outcomes in young children: A scoping review. *PLoS one*, 16(12), e0261643.

⁴ Hart, A., Hall, V., & Henwood, F. (2003). Helping health and social care professionals to develop an 'inequalities imagination': a model for use in education and practice. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 41(5), 480-489.

These key areas of concern were the focus of the HOA programme from 2017-2020. DfE ministers extended the programme for a further two years until 2022.

Hastings Schools. In Hastings, there are 24 schools, including locally maintained schools, academies, special schools; and a Further Education (FE) college. In 2017-2019 there were 25 schools, but two schools merged into one secondary in September 2019. The current number does not include independent schools which were not the focus of HOA programme support. The table below (Table 1) provides a breakdown of primary, secondary, special educational needs, and disability (SEND) schools and colleges in Hastings (including St. Leonards-on-Sea) in the period 2017-2021.

Table 1: Schools and Colleges in Hastings

Institution Type	Number of schools/colleges (September 2019-July 2022)
Primary	18
Secondary	3 ⁵
Special Schools	3 ⁶
FE College	1 ⁷
TOTAL	24 schools and 1 college

In Hastings, there are 4 Multi-academy Trusts (MATs). The table below provides a breakdown of MATs working in Hastings, the number of schools in each MAT and the number of schools in Hastings.

Table 2: Description of MATs in Hastings

MAT	Number of schools within MAT	Number of MAT schools in Hastings
University of Brighton Academy Trust	15	9
Ark Schools Academy Trust	39	4
Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust	16	4
Kemnal Academy Trust	45	1
Sabden Multi Academy Trust	5	1
Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust	2	2

⁵ There were two secondary schools from the same MAT which merged in September 2019. Therefore, in 2017-2019 there were 4 secondary schools in Hastings.

⁶ The table does not include a new special school in Hastings that opened in September 2021.

⁷ East Sussex College was created in 2018 as result of a merger between Sussex Downs College and Sussex Coast College Hastings.

Evaluation Aims and Methodology

This report presents the findings of a local evaluation. It identifies specifically what has been achieved, how and what learning for the future there is from the programme. Three research questions (RQs) guided this evaluation, as provided in the original commissioning specification.

- 1) What has the HOA done towards meeting its original delivery goals?
- 2) What progress/perceived progress has the HOA made?
- 3) What were the successes and challenges of the HOA programme?

Utilising a qualitative design, a process, progress, and system evaluation was conducted to answer the three research questions above, respectively. The work was undertaken between April and July 2022.

In the process evaluation, data was collected from HOA unpublished reports as well as published external reports. The HOA delivery team responded to additional questions via email and verbal conversations. These added to clarity regarding the specifics of programme implementation, where gaps in knowledge were identified.

The progress evaluation utilised existing HOA reports, and six interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in each priority to understand the perceived progress of the overall HOA programme.

Finally, for the system evaluation, one member of the HOA Partnership Board was interviewed, and a focus group was held with the HOA local delivery team to understand the challenges, successes, and legacy of the HOA programme. The system evaluation also included information that was received via email from two members of the HOA Partnership Board.

In total, seven interviews and one focus group were held. All of these were held virtually on Microsoft (MS) Teams. The interviews and focus groups were audio taped. Anonymised written transcriptions were used for analysis. After the interviews, participants were sent a copy of the transcript as an opportunity to make additional comments and/ or amend or remove passages.

Thematic analysis was conducted to investigate the data, using the NVivo framework approach. The analysis was fully documented. Conclusions can be linked to the original data sources.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee of Life, Health, and Physical Sciences CREC, University of Brighton.

Findings

RQ1: What has Hastings Opportunity Area (HOA) done towards meeting its original delivery aims?

The main priorities identified by HOA to improve social mobility were **Maths, Literacy, Mental Health, and Broadening Horizons** (see [Department for Education, HOA Delivery Plan 2017](#)). Supporting priorities were **Attendance, Inclusion, and Quality of Teaching**. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, HOA identified an additional priority of **Recovery**; a direct and fast-paced response to emerging needs. In the fourth year of the programme, the DfE identified 'Twinning'⁸ as a further priority to share the learning across East Sussex and beyond. Each priority demonstrated a multi-strand approach of interlinking projects across the whole town to facilitate social mobility for all pupils in Hastings with a particular emphasis on those facing multiple social disadvantages.

A full breakdown of aims, delivery targets and the number of schools and individual beneficiaries reached for main priorities, is provided in **Table 3** below.

⁸ 'Twinning' was a priority introduced in HOA programme year 4. The HOA programme partnered with targeted areas such as Portsmouth, to share best practice across priorities e.g., maths, literacy, and inclusion.

Table 3: Overall Description of Main HOA Priorities

Priority	Aims	Delivery Targets	School Numbers Reached (No./%)	Pupil Numbers Reached (No.)
Maths	Hastings will be known as a centre of excellence for teaching maths, and pupils achieve maths results that place them in the top half of the country at all Key Stages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support 8 primary school and all secondary school pupils in KS2-KS3. All schools take part in Maths training at a/the chosen primary school. All secondary schools create a STEM hub with training to improve STEM teaching. A programme of networking events. Development programme for staff teaching in Further Education (FE). A Careers fair promoting importance of maths. The Sussex Maths Hub supports teaching and offers training and support. 	21 of the 24 schools and 1 FE college in Hastings (84%)	18,734 pupils ⁹
Literacy	Pupils in Hastings have the literacy skills they need to make the most of every opportunity and achieve English results in the top half of the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town-wide literacy campaign across the whole community. Improve teaching of phonics in all schools. Improve teaching of literacy from age 3-7 in 15 target schools. Improve parental engagement and developing early literacy in the home by offering training to all practitioners working with families. 	24 schools and 1 FE college in Hastings (100%)	4,515 pupils ¹⁰
Broadening Horizons	Young people are inspired, motivated, and equipped for adult life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All secondary and FE college aged pupils have at least four meaningful encounters with employers over the life of the Opportunity Area programme. All school and FE college pupils participate in regular extra-curricular enrichment activity. Young people have positive attitudes towards extra-curricular enrichment activity, as measured through regular surveys. 	24 schools and 1 FE college in Hastings (100%)	35,903 pupils ¹¹
Mental Health	Pupils experience positive personal and social wellbeing, understand the signs of being emotionally or mentally unwell, and receive excellent support if they need it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools in Hastings will have a trained mental health lead. The i-Rock service (advice and support service for emotional, mental health, employment, education, and housing related topics for 14- to 25-year-olds) will be expanded and will have increased capacity. All Hastings parents will access support through digital and light touch seminars, engagement in schools, and other settings. 	24 schools and 1 FE college in Hastings (100%)	4,121 pupils ⁵

⁹ This is the total number of pupils in Key Stage 1-4, enrolled at all engaging schools, from 2018 to 2021. Pupil numbers were not collected in 2019-2020 due to the pandemic. This also does not include East Sussex College pupil data as it was not available. Therefore, the number provided will be lower than the actual number of pupils reached.

¹⁰ This number may include the same individual more than once. Additionally, this number does not include pupil numbers from projects where there was no data available and therefore the number provided may be lower than the actual number of pupils reached.

¹¹ This number may include the same individual more than once, as it is the total number of engaging pupils from all relevant strands of the Enrichment priority.

In total, 58 HOA projects were delivered between Year 1 and Year 4, targeting Hastings' pupils from 4 to 25 years of age. Across all priorities and programme years, KS2 and KS3 pupils (i.e., 8 – 14 years of age) were the most often targeted groups (reached by 45 of 58 projects). HOA took a whole system approach to best support pupils. Most HOA projects (43 out of 58 projects) targeted individual pupils and the systems around them, including school staff (i.e., senior leadership teams, teachers, teaching assistants), practitioners, parents, and the wider community. The HOA projects used both evidence-based pre-existing implementations (62% of all projects) and newly created implementations. Furthermore, the HOA programme utilised both external and locally based expert support in design and delivery of the projects with an emphasis on local capacity-building.

For more detailed information about the delivery process, please see [Appendix 1](#). For a summary of projects delivered, please see [Appendix 2](#). Finally, for a detailed description of all projects delivered within each main priority, please see the individual priority reports in [Appendix 3](#).

HOA has implemented a complex and place-based intervention programme that operated across multiple levels of the Hastings system including pupils, parents, schools, and community groups and organisations. The complexity of the HOA programme derives from many factors, interconnected within the Hastings context. These include the number of groups and organisational levels targeted through HOA, the number and variability of outcome assessments, the diversity of people involved with HOA, the degree of flexibility and the tailoring of the implementations. Complex interventions work best when taking a place-based approach rather than being standardised (Craig et al, 2008).¹²

Learning from the Delivery Process Evaluation

In the HOA programme, there were targeted and universal interventions with clear expectations. The delivery of interventions included continuous expert support to ensure fidelity and quality of delivery. HOA delivery also benefited where it was inclusive and accessible, especially for pupils residing in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. This meant local implementation teams going into these communities or providing resources for communities to engage more easily in projects. The HOA reached its initial targets with only a few exceptions. Utilising hybrid ways of working, offering opportunities to share organic learning and good practice were effective strategies that enabled successful delivery.

¹² Craig, P., Dieppe, P., Macintyre, S., Michie, S., Nazareth, I., Petticrew, M., et al., (2008). Developing and evaluating complex interventions: the new Medical Research Council guidance. *BMJ*, 337.

RQ2: What progress (perceived progress) has HOA made?

This section explores the emerging impact on the HOA programme's target groups by assessing progress. It reports on multi-level (e.g., pupil, family, and school) and multi-method (e.g., reach figures, quantitative, interview and focus group) data¹³ grouped under six headings: targeted beneficiaries, demonstrating progress, mechanisms of progress, quality of provision, challenges to progress prior to/not involving Covid-19 and the impact of Covid-19 on progress. Learning in this section reflects a holistic picture of HOA and its progress as a complex place-based programme.

Targeted beneficiaries

Pupils, parents, school staff, practitioners, and community organisations were the targeted beneficiaries of the HOA. Across all priorities of the HOA, analysis of existing data showed that projects reached, and even on some projects surpassed, the original targets set at the beginning of the programme, except for targets related to parent engagement. *For more detailed information about targeted beneficiaries for each priority please go to the individual priority reports in [Appendix 3](#).*

Demonstrating Progress (perceived early outcomes)

The HOA programme strengthened what already works well across pupils, practitioners, parents, and schools. Moreover, the programme challenged the broader issues that impact pupils' lives in order to ensure every pupil in Hastings has equal opportunity for a better future. There was emerging evidence for progress in all outcomes within existing data. Furthermore, in interviews, stakeholders from each of the main priorities were asked about their experiences in the HOA, and what they observed about the impact of the HOA. Based on the interviews, themes were identified from each of the priorities that overlapped to tell the overarching story of the HOA. These are discussed below. All those who were interviewed, agreed that the HOA projects resulted in improved outcomes for pupils, [Appendix 3](#) provides *detailed and further information about perceived early outcomes for pupils for each priority*.

The HOA programme showed a strong and interconnected network of school and community members, working collaboratively to support promising outcomes for pupils and their families and improve their social mobility. This is the strongest progress identified across Hastings and was mentioned in all interviews with key stakeholders of the programme.

The HOA programme was viewed as a positive vehicle of social mobility and change by school staff and community providers. Progress around collaboration was key across all priorities. The HOA has created a collaborative partnership across Hastings. The HOA programme brought the diverse community in Hastings together. This included the application and implementation of projects collaboratively between providers.

“... we are one of a number of HOA opportunities areas around the country and the driving force of that, and obviously seeing education as a, as a vehicle for sort of driving social change and quality of life in these areas...”

“... what the HOA have fostered is collaboration in the town, which definitely wasn't there before...”

¹³ Text in blue boxes in this and following pages of this report include quotes from interviews and a focus group.

The HOA built strong relationships between schools, providers, pupils, and their families. This is key for developing sustainable relationships and elevating long term progress and impact. Linked to the sharing of good practice and increased collaboration, for instance, Teach Meets were important and well attended communities of practice for sharing good practice, building further knowledge, and networking across schools. Hastings schools demonstrated positive active learning that had positive practical impact. This has led to the development of good practice across Hastings, and across priorities. Moreover, Hastings schools and providers have demonstrated innovation and creativity in their approaches, especially during Covid-19, when they leaned into online communication and ways of engaging pupils.

“... I think for the short-term key work teams...the success of the process of the work is dependent on the relationship with the school, and the key person within the school...”

“... we have found by getting the children to hand write an invitation, and to name an adult at home that you want to come in, has real impact...”

“... the HOA funding has enabled us to, I think to get to a point where we are able to ... And we have still got good practices that we have developed...”

“... set out some challenges and, and things for the for the young people, and also let them know, making sure that they knew about all the different online things...”

“... the whole process, the HOA process of monitoring, evaluating it is not just a withdrawal centre, we are actually looking at the impact of it. We are creating our own success criteria now for those areas, which means that I would say the HOA has brought in that culture of evaluation..”

An important part of this active learning community is the development of a culture of evaluation across schools and providers involved in projects. Assessing, monitoring, and identifying gaps in practice and learning was integral to making progress against targets and key performance indicators. Participants in interviews remarked on the impact the HOA projects had on school staff reporting highly positive perceptions of staff training provided by the programme.

“... there's a huge amount of teacher training going on with the HOA here at the school, [...] a lot of the teachers are still here, so they would have benefited from that...”

“... teachers are better trained because of the project, they have a better understanding of the mastery approach because of the project...”

According to interviewees, all school staff became more confident and felt more empowered to create strategies and review what worked well and what has not. In the Literacy priority, staff training promoted a structure for schools to teach reading. Literacy projects generally have opened more opportunity to train school staff (e.g., Accelerated Reader) and community member (e.g., Get Hastings Reading) training.

“... we have colleagues who ... speak very, very positively about how it has changed their approach to supporting children to read wisely and read different reading material and support them to choose that...”

There was an observation reported in interviews about positive progress with parental engagement in schools with the help of the HOA. Sharing information was a strong theme throughout interviews, indicating that this was a significant area of progress the HOA programme has made in terms of connecting with and building relationships with parents.

“... it's certainly given them the opportunity to really get to know those families in in those areas that they're working, and they've got some really good relationships with those with those families...”

There was positive change in school culture and ethos due to the implementation of the HOA projects. The changes have had a lasting impact and created pedagogical progress. Staff have noted improvements in accessibility to learning materials and aspirational activities for pupils. For example, as indicated in the quote below, in the Literacy priority, Accelerated Reader improved access to reading material that pupils might have otherwise missed out on. During Covid-19 restrictions, some projects needed to be delivered outside, and this removed another barrier for pupils facing multiple disadvantages, who would otherwise have struggled to access indoor activities. For example, interviewees mentioned that some pupils had been banned from accessing certain community spaces where activities were held.

“... for Accelerated Reader ... one of the key elements has been about opening doors for students and pupils, to a range of reading material that they may not have access to before...”

“... it was working really well doing it outdoors. Because it did mean we were calling those young people who would not come into the centres or were not allowed you some of them are banned from the Centres, it did mean that we could, we could make sure we get all in place in as well. So, we have continued with doing the outdoor sessions...”

“... I don't think we will ever go back to pre-project days. I think that change has happened, that mind shift has happened, people have seen the impact of it, the training has had impact...”

Mechanisms of Progress

Across all interviews conducted, key stakeholders of the programme identified multiple actions, relationships, and processes that enabled the progress of the HOA programme. These, in turn, increased the programme's impact on pupils and more widely across Hastings. The HOA supported a broad diversity of needs in schools and across the town. The HOA projects provided schools with a range of evidence-based options in terms of how they could address these needs. The HOA programme recognised the challenges faced by schools, pupils, and their families across Hastings. This informed their programme design and implementation which contributed to its effectiveness.

“... I was overwhelmingly positive about it [HOA], because Hastings is such an area of deprivation, any investment in the area with a particular focus on that [maths] [...] would be valuable...”

Interviews demonstrated connections and shared ambitions between the HOA programme's strategic focus and school strategies. For instance, in the broadening horizons priority, the expert panel which decided on enrichment activities was perceived as being enabling in terms of their strategic overview. Interviewees viewed experts as having an important position in overseeing strategic thinking. Clarity and implementation of the HOA's strategic focus was effective in the maths priority, especially in terms of providing much needed resources that otherwise may not have been funded across schools.

“... I feel that it mirrors and our ... strategic plan is based on the needs of us driving our academies to where we feel it is appropriate, because we have an overarching strategic plan...”

“... I think that you do need those kinds of experts, and people looking at the strategic overview of it. You know, where those gaps are, and where they are needed...”

“... they were very clear where they wanted to get the funding spent. And that strategic thinking had already been done. And the use of funding for manipulatives...the work has been really quite revolutionary...”

One of the most common mechanisms of progress was localised control over how funding was used. HOA's funding was critical to schools and community providers. It gave them the opportunity to access support, implement projects and build capacity in new ways. The HOA funding was utilised in conjunction with other ongoing funding streams, maximising benefit from resources and creating additional opportunities for the community. Community providers highlighted the importance of the HOA funding being constant across the programme years, as it allowed them to focus on running their activities without worrying about funding.

Additionally, they identified that having funding across longer periods of time meant that there was more time to implement activities and achieve and demonstrate an impact. The HOA programme supported community providers and schools across strands to hire more staff and allocate staff where they were most needed. In this way, general capacity was enhanced and used most effectively. In addition, external support increased capacity for schools to provide targeted support by creating more places in their projects for targeted pupils. External support gave schools more time to build relationships with individual pupils and provide them with follow up support.

“... with the HOA is it's much more about accessing funding streams that you can then manage in schools, which is, which is much more useful...”

“... the HOA had funding for those SLEs. So, the funding brought those SLEs in and I think most of those SLEs have affiliations with the maths hub. That is because they are all independent People that go where funding is, and HOA had funding...”

“... use the funding to build capacity, which is so it's completely the right thing to do...”

“... we've been able to put in that intensive support; some of that ability comes from the funding we get from the HOA to ...get those members of staff the hours they need to be able to do it properly...”

Taking a whole system approach was identified as being integral to making meaningful progress. Whole system approaches happened both in the community and at school levels. Taking a whole system approach has provided consistency across Hastings, which previously did not exist. Interviewees recognised projects needed to work for everyone across the whole system, if there was to be lasting, meaningful progress. This was also the case for providers working within schools, in collaboration with school staff.

“... I think it's been useful in developing a community within Hastings, a community of schools that are working really hard to develop a mastery approach...”

“... you barely really get success when you single groups out. The trick is to make your schoolwork [...] in most vulnerable groups and have it work for everybody. And nobody feels nobody feels singled out. As it should be...”

“... and you have to look at it as a whole and how it builds a culture of the school community and make it somewhere where people want to be...”

“... I think it is more about a whole school sort of ethos of how the service itself is viewed. And the vast majority really bang to work and engage really well with regular feedback from the school's...”

Flexibility was a commonly discussed mechanism of progress and was linked to the theme of school ownership of the programme. This was specifically important in the face of Covid-19, when there was massive disruption to projects, and providers needed to find new ways to continue making progress. Some saw adaptation to online learning and resources as a positive, whereas some interviewees highlighted challenges for specific staff members. Schools highlighted the sense of school ownership, that autonomy and freedom to choose how to use HOA programme funding in their projects.

“... a real strength has been that we can approach it in different ways...”

“... schools have ownership of the work with the HOA ...”

Quality of Provision

The quality of provision was important in terms of providing appropriate and meaningful support to schools and the community. For example, one aspect of providing good quality provision in the HOA programme was its ability to identify and engage with the targeted groups, e.g., breaking down barriers, accessing and maintaining relationships with target groups. However, there were times the HOA offers were perceived to be unfocused due to the overwhelming number of projects and initiatives happening at the same time. They occasionally occurred on an ad hoc basis. There was a positive view on the bespoke nature

of projects that occurred across different priorities of the programme. Additionally, the streamlined, quick and easy grant application process was viewed positively in terms of making quick and strategic progress.

"... I think it is breaking down those barriers for many of our parents..."

"... I think what we've realized through the HOA work is that we can be more strategic with how we spend our money to create more bespoke interventions for students..."

"... with the grants, they put straight into schools ... it is much more useful..."

"... the process is much more streamlined And you can start putting plans in and they are very understanding of how you want to spend the money..."

Challenges to Progress – Prior to/not including Covid-19

One of the most significant challenges to progress was the issue of staff retention and recruitment. Although staff training and progress in upskilling pedagogy were viewed positively, staff mobility was a barrier to further progress. Staff mobility, described as the biggest challenge, created inconsistencies with the delivery and sustainability of projects and learning/ teaching models. Moreover, a few projects have made little progress. For instance, one stakeholder talked about priority changes in schools, describing a 'watered-down effect'. Some stakeholders argued this could be due to human challenges. For instance, in the Maths priority, stakeholders mentioned a disconnection between Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs), Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) and Maths Leads in terms of capacity and willpower to drive change in some schools. Some stakeholders mentioned that some projects did not receive as much attention later in the programme years as they received at the beginning of the programme. For example, in the attendance priority, the stakeholder reported that there was a natural decrease in attendance for holiday clubs funded by the enrichment grant.

"... the projects are ongoing, but they're always different people leading them..."

"... I think that only about half the schools initially that were involved in the project are still with maths mastery, because it's expensive... quite limited funding to continue with that subscription..."

"... that's been a struggle, not because of the HOA, but just because of staffing ... there are recruitment issues still in Hastings ..."

"... was a vast input of funding for Triple P intervention ... And then gradually over the years, that sort of wound down as it reached its milestones..."

In some cases, this was due to a lack of funding because of the expensive nature of projects provided by the HOA. This followed a theme in which tapered funding caused issues in the ability to deliver and progress projects. Therefore, a rapidly changing, and moving workforce, coupled with issues in funding, represented a significant challenge to the HOA programme's progress.

Interviewees reported a need for additional learning in relation to further support. This included additional external provision to better promotion of projects. This way schools and community providers could have more understanding of what was being provided, where and by whom. Additionally, the mental health priority identified that misunderstanding and miscommunication between mental health providers and schools constituted a barrier to progress.

"... I would have liked to see is perhaps some more ... good off site alternative provision..."

"... more information to providers about what other providers are doing ... would be useful..."

"... when a project first started, nobody's quite sure what it is and what it's for..."

The Impact of Covid-19 on Progress

The significance of the Covid-19 pandemic presented a range of issues in terms of stalling the HOA programme's progress. Stakeholders reported pauses in the implementation of projects, while others reported projects taking significantly more time to implement. This meant risk to the consistency of implementation. Moreover, the loss of consistency in pupils' daily lives was noted to cause further issues. This interruption to project delivery also meant that staff had to invest more time to ensure projects did not get side-lined by other increasingly urgent priorities. There was a need to keep progressing by maintaining awareness of the availability and potential value of the projects.

"... difficulty was to keep the project, high profile in everybody's consciousness, because there was so much going on..."

"... a pandemic, hits us, all schools ...you've had a loss in routine, a massive increase in mental health issues with being out of routine."

In some cases, the Covid-19 pandemic changed the delivery format of projects so that providers could ensure guideline safety requirements were met, further disrupting the consistency of project delivery. Linked to the issue of inconsistency during Covid-19, the pandemic also influenced need. Covid-19 was associated with new needs emerging, and pre-existing needs becoming more urgent. For example, maths projects established a culture of collaboration across Hastings schools before the Covid-19 pandemic. School representatives had a key role in this. Due to restrictions during the pandemic, not being able to meet face to face limited the opportunities for ongoing collaboration. This resulted in schools feeling isolated again, similar to how they felt before the HOA programme. Meetings moved to an online format, however, working online brought new needs around ensuring active online engagement from staff who became quite passive during meetings. The stakeholder explained this can happen when there are large numbers of people in a Microsoft Teams meeting. With

"... we started them as quickly as we could- put in all the... COVID safety things ... obviously, we had to change what activities we were doing to enable us to do that..."

"... we've had to really put on a huge amount, more mental health support, and wellbeing support, which is all resources as well, that we've needed to do..."

regards to other pre-existing needs, engagement of pupils remained an issue as activities in the Enrichment priority moved online. Covid-19 also highlighted other areas that needed more support. New needs that emerged during Covid-19 included the necessity of providing additional support to vulnerable pupils.

Building additional IT infrastructure was a new need that emerged due to Covid-19 and was supported by other external funding which helped to overcome the challenges leading to inconsistency and enabled continued implementation and progress towards HOA targets.

"... as part of that ongoing support for the infrastructure of IT. I was given 400 laptops by the DfE to use in a project that I saw fit, literacy linked if possible. So, I allocated those 400 laptops across all of our academies, for Accelerated Reader."

"... we have got very new head teachers, they were contacting me saying, I do not know what to do. I am asking your advice. And the first thing I said to them was, I am an experienced head teacher. No one has ever experienced this."

Beyond the HOA programme, school staff felt uncertain about what to do and overwhelmed with the additional work (e.g., increased number of meetings) due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The HOA tried to mitigate negative impacts of the pandemic. The disruption of Covid-19 also led to some positives in schools through HOA's contribution. For example, it gave staff more time to focus on how to implement literacy projects effectively with a small number of pupils who were able to engage at the beginning of Covid-19.

Learning from Emerging Progress and Outcomes

To summarise, the **key mechanisms of progress** identified in this evaluation, after speaking to key stakeholders were:

- Supporting a broad diversity of needs for pupils.
- Recognising challenges faced by different parts of the community.
- Shared ambitions between partnerships and organisations.
- The role of experts in implementation and embedding is critical.
- Strategic focus that is effective for everyone and is in line with need.
- Local (e.g., schools) control over how funding is used.
- Being mindful and realistic about capacity of stakeholders and providers.
- A whole system approach which aims to change and improve current systems.
- Being flexible in the place-based approach.

In addition, interviews with stakeholders highlighted important mechanisms for the themes listed below:

Quality of Provision

- Providing appropriate and meaningful support.
- Bespoke interventions instead of a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.
- Streamlined processes to remove barriers around engagement, e.g., using feedback from school staff to make applications for funding simple.

Challenges to Progress

- Staff retention and recruitment were a consistent issue.
- Lack of funding for externally funded support.
- Additional learning in relation to further support and provisions.
- Lack of clarity (e.g., lack of clear understanding and communication) about the importance and the aims of projects between partnerships/ organisations.

Impact of Covid-19

- Stalled the progress of HOA projects.
- Risk to the consistency of the delivery of projects.
- New needs emerged that had to be met.
- Pre-existing needs became more urgent/ changed.
- School staff felt uncertain and unsure of how to proceed with teaching and implementing projects.
- Time is an important resource for school staff when implementing projects and responding to pupil need.

RQ3: What were the Successes and Challenges for the HOA Programme?

This section reports on the system evaluation element of the HOA programme, from the perspective of the local delivery team (focus group) and the independent chair of the HOA Partnership Board (interview). The evaluation also included additional input from two Partnership Board members (via questionnaires). Below are the themes that emerged. Successes and challenges are considered as mechanisms of system change and barriers to system change, and the potential for future success is identified.

Mechanisms of System Change

Taking a place-based approach the HOA, ensured that there was consultation with stakeholders (e.g., pupils, parents, and school staff) with lived experience of challenges. Focus group members highlighted the importance of youth voice and empowerment, as well as the utilisation of working groups. Moreover, taking a place-based approach, allowed schools to have independence and ownership over interventions and projects. This meant schools had their own motivations and drive to engage with HOA support. Within this freedom, schools had to be accountable to the HOA, creating a network of feedback. Finally, the place-based approach was locally driven in terms of the local team having strong, historic connections across the community prior to working on the HOA programme and significant expertise in areas of concern. Local ownership of the programme therefore re-enforced clarity around goals, trust between collaborators, and importantly, the ability to be accurately and effectively responsive to local need.

“...I think the very nature of it being placed based and focused around Hastings was incredibly important...”

The HOA programme is a test and learn programme, developing innovative strategies and testing best practice. The HOA implemented learning and feedback to ensure delivery and interventions were flexible. Therefore, being a test and learn programme, coupled with taking a place-based approach with local investment and ownership, meant that the HOA programme grew and changed organically in relation to need. The partnership board had representatives from different community partners.

“... it was representative across the different sectors. So, we had the local volunteer centre, we had Hastings Borough Council, we had the CCG, we had East Sussex and we had the key maps, we also were working really collaboratively with the special schools, because quite often special schools are out of the picture...”

The representatives across the partnership board co-ordinated priorities and approaches to delivery. This meant the partnership board, on behalf of the broader Hastings community, was responsible for prioritising needs. An essential aspect of the board was having an independent chair, who was neutral and in a non-educational role. The partnership board therefore reduced scepticism across Hastings with regards to how and where funding would be spent. The partnership board took a holistic approach, concentrating on the broader ecosystems of support around families and pupils to support social mobility.

A particularly successful part of the HOA programme was the bespoke offers that were delivered. Bespoke projects utilised evidence-based models of working and challenged previous models of working that took a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, that ignores individual need. The HOA projects were effective because they filled gaps in support. Local delivery team members identified that an important part of the bespoke projects was clarity. There needed to be a clear rationale behind the projects, and clarity around the expectations on schools to engage and for projects to be successful.

“... it's really nice to focus in on schools with bespoke programs, meeting the needs of those schools...”

“... we had a trustee [...] that looks to employ a therapist or a counsellor to address the children that they recognized as significant mental health and wellbeing issues post pandemic. But we are never going to be in a position to come under the or reach the ceiling to trigger CAMHS involvement for example. So, they wanted to manage those programs themselves, which had great effect that we are very pleased with the outcomes...”

Building capacity across Hastings, particularly in schools, was noted as a successful mechanism for system change. Embedding good practice via training and support was ongoing even during Covid-19. There was strategic thinking around building staff capacity in terms of providing more staff to support interventions and projects, and to train up staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning. All priorities included staff capacity building and were mentioned in interviews. Recruiting school staff into Hastings was particularly challenging, and in contrast to delivery team and key priority member interviews, one member of the partnership board mentioned that the board did not view retention as an issue early in the HOA programme.

A key mechanism in successful system change across Hastings was building strong relationships, networks and links across the community and schools to create a collaborative working environment. Building these strong relationships included the building of trust between MATs, community partners, the local authority, and external support. Furthermore, the HOA programme team removed pre-conceived prejudices between MATs and the local council and its partners. They fostered relationships and created programmes that successfully linked schools to the community. Therefore, the HOA programme-built links across the community successfully.

“... funding streams have contributed to the building of staff capacity, staff knowledge and developed programmes. Leading to strengthened opportunities for organisations to access other funding streams by demonstrating their strengthened position in offering evidence based interventions and programmes to support children and young people in Hastings with the essential foundations for success...”

“... building the relationships, which has got us to a point where we're able to drive forward the things that the schools need and want, really, and then obviously, having that link with East Sussex and the DfE means that we have been breaking down barriers...”

Another key mechanism of success was the importance of supporting collaboration across Hastings and beyond, to build meaningful social mobility. Collaboration was at the core of HOA programme, utilising a multi-agency partnership board, that created and guided its own structure of collaborative decision making. The partnership board sat at the apex overseeing needs across Hastings, followed by the MATs who would discuss needs across their schools, leading to collaborative implementation of projects and interventions. Participants discussed the necessity of consistent communication. Finally, participants from the local delivery team discussed that schools now collaborate and actively share knowledge in Hastings and beyond.

“... the most important mechanisms of change is local, regional and national governance structures formed together with the HOA committing to work in an adapted and sustainable way...”

Barriers to System Change

Differences across schools. The progress of the HOA programme was experienced differently across primary and secondary schools. A more positive and progressive experience was reported at primary school level. Discussion took place around barriers to success at secondary school and further education levels due to the limited capacity of SLTs during earlier years of the programme. Additionally, the HOA has been criticised for not focusing enough

“... it is about constantly reinventing yourself so that you are enabling those leaders to then pick those programmes up, develop the skills and go forward. And I think we have been able to do some of that, particularly with the secondary schools...”

attention on transition from primary to secondary school earlier in the programme. In Year 5, Transition has been pro-actively addressed as a key priority. However, as noted by the participants, this was adopted rather late in the HOA programme lifespan. Finally, a notable and significant issue highlighted by the local team, was the significant turnover of head teachers in secondary schools.

“... we didn't see quite the same progress at secondaries...”

“... I'm staggered at the loss of knowledge that happens between moving from primary to secondary in our education system...”

Challenges Around Capacity. Capacity was both a strength and a barrier to the HOA programme's success. As discussed in the previous section about the differences across schools and the turnover of secondary school head teachers there were issues with staff retention across Hastings. This meant that training and capacity building of staff was lost when staff moved on from Hastings. Furthermore, some schools confirmed their interest to engage with the HOA programme, although capacity and time presented a challenge to full engagement. In other cases, the HOA local delivery team depended on additional support from partners and providers engaged in the programme to help them deliver and monitor the HOA programme projects. This is because the HOA local delivery team had limited capacity. Again, this demonstrates the importance of relationship building and collaboration not only for those who receive the support of the programme, but also for the providers of the HOA programme. Without strong community connections, large programmes struggle to implement effective cultural change towards positive social mobility.

“... we are a very fragile ecosystem, and our stuff shift. So, you know, some of our schools have had an entirely new senior leadership teams, not just new heads, in the time of the program, and that is a challenge...”

Challenges Created. A key challenge for the HOA team was the issue of consistency and continuity around delivery and impact during Covid-19. During this time, there were notable school staff and pupil absences and illness, and the additional pressures to manage this for schools and project leads. Moreover, school closures meant staff and pupils were less accessible for HOA projects to take place and some of the projects were therefore paused. External to schools, staff and pupils, the partnership board experienced a shift in membership, which created additional challenges. Participants talked about the pandemic dislocating Hastings and the HOA programme. Covid-19 also made collecting data difficult, and therefore understanding the successes and challenges around progress have become difficult to determine.

“... maintaining interest and enthusiasm over a long period, with some members changing...”

“... I think that that the pandemic time changed a lot of people's behaviours and actions and the ability to interact. And it was very dislocating...”

“... the board became more of a sort of an oversight vehicle to which a report was given. So how what activities are we seeing, and it was more receiving a report than directing. And that was probably also right, because our main mechanism of delivery with the schools at the heart, of course, we are not functioning.”

The Immediate Rapid and Sensitive Response. The HOA team responded pro-actively to emerging needs during Covid-19. They very rapidly put in place a programme of additional support, working nimbly to provide access to funding and resources around food, welfare, and mental health. Participants note that they were able to rapidly support communities during Covid-19 e.g., providing additional IT equipment to support the implementation of existing programmes. Through the Recovery priority, the HOA responded to schools' frustration in relation to Covid-19 restrictions and regulations. During this time, the HOA worked

to repurpose funding to target needs. Therefore, the HOA team recognised that there were new, emerging needs during Covid-19, that required an immediate response. The HOA local delivery team consulted with schools about their needs, utilising the strong relationships that they had built in previous programme years. As learning and working from home became the norm, the HOA local delivery team supported schools to deliver home resource packs to pupils and their families and provided online delivery of projects. During this time, the partnership board temporarily acted as more of an oversight vehicle, while projects were paused, rather than providing direction, to ensure that recovery was successful and effective across the community.

Learning from system evaluation for potential future success

Stronger marketing and promotion. The HOA local delivery team discussed learning from the HOA programme. A key part of learning was the future use of stronger marketing and promotion of the HOA activities. Although it is not necessarily important in terms of impact of the HOA projects, signposting, and making schools and communities more aware of available opportunities would have helped to build stronger networks across Hastings.

Persistency and transparency. Place-based approaches such as the HOA programme need to be persistent in engaging with schools that have capacity issues around time and staff. There needs to be a balance between encouraging engagement and respecting capacity. Furthermore, the process of how funding is allocated, by who and to whom needs to be transparent. Transparency in the HOA programme also helped to overcome barriers around trust between schools and the HOA team.

The structure of programme evaluation. Implementation and monitoring offered some learning opportunities. Having external evaluation early for different aspects of the programme would have been helpful. Additionally, those who participated in this evaluation discussed being sharper with monitoring and evaluation, earlier on in the process. Moreover, some monitoring and evaluation was impacted by the input of external funding, who prioritised specific outcomes, e.g., number of people engaging, rather than what the impact of engaging was. This was especially the case in the Enrichment funded activities.

Voice and Empowerment. There were situations where participants felt that some stakeholders had not been effectively included in the discussions. This extended to parents and senior leadership teams in schools. It is important to include those who are representative of the whole community in the development, implementation and evaluation of programmes like HOA. Different stakeholder groups will contribute to the programme with different perspectives based on their lived experience. Bringing different perspectives together offers the relevant knowledge that can support the resolution of challenges effectively. This helps to empower stakeholders in decision-making and in what happens in their local community.

Time as a Resource. The implementation of place-based programmes takes time. As such, the programme extension provided more time for the programme to be implemented and embedded across schools and the local community. Additionally, this meant stronger relationships could be built, as these also take time. A three-year place-based programme may not be enough to make lasting changes.

Sustainability

This section further utilises, the qualitative information collected from interviews with key members of the HOA programme delivery, the interview with a Board Member, and the focus group with the Local Delivery Team, to discuss the sustainability of the HOA programme, and its continued legacy across Hastings and East Sussex.

HOA as a Sustainable Model

There is evidence that across schools, there will be financial planning to continue developing and delivering HOA projects. However, as the funding begins to dwindle, some participants said that there is still some uncertainty in terms of sustainability. This is because, as previously noted in the evaluation of Research Question 1, HOA provides external funding of external resources e.g., Destination Reader, Maths SLEs. Therefore, as noted in the evaluation of Research Question 2, some of these are too expensive for schools to maintain. The HOA local delivery team discussed possible issues around reduced capacity due to less funding.

“... my senior leaders have budgeted for the strategies that support those things to happen. Yes, because they are important. And that is where the sustainability comes in...”

“... it is a big chunk of money for accelerated reader for our primaries and secondaries in Hastings [...] what would that look like in year two? And what would that look like in year three? Because we would not be getting the money from Hastings, from the opportunity area again...”

There was a firm perspective, especially in the Maths priority, that some of the changes introduced will be permanent. This is also evident in the evaluation of the progress of the HOA programme. Participants stated a shift in the culture and ethos towards teaching and learning. Hastings has made lasting change across priorities.

“... never go back to procedural...”

Although there are worries around funding there has been real progress made in terms of schools' ownership of projects. This has led to embedding projects across the schools and this becoming integral to their curriculum and pedagogy. In support of this, HOA local delivery team members also highlighted that training and practice have been embedded across Hastings. There is evidence of continued sustainable progress despite removing HOA funding.

“...staff training and additional staffing funded to deliver interventions and programmes in schools, has led to schools continuing some programmes post HOA funding...”

Legacy Structure of the HOA (Long Term Outcomes)

From the perspective of the HOA local delivery team, the HOA's legacy will include a lasting network across Hastings, with successes around inclusion and engagement of the education system, community providers and local authority members. This will be beneficial to everyone, beyond pupil academic outcomes and personal development. There is a renewed focus on school improvement and wellbeing, and a willingness to work on this issue collaboratively. This cultural shift is an important part of the HOA programme's legacy. Already, there is consideration of how this legacy can be sustained.

“... the professional learning community that's been created, and by that it might not be individual teachers or whatever, but it's the leaders within all of those establishments who access that funding who are working together...”

“... from a local authority perspective, establishing strategic links with the county wide school partnership structures is fundamental to sustaining partnership working, that looks outside Hastings too...”

The HOA local delivery team discussed the ongoing commitment and continuation of projects. They highlighted maths and literacy as continuing after the HOA funding has finished. This is supported by the literacy priority key member who discussed fitting projects into school budgeting for next year. The HOA local delivery team also discussed the continued engagement and ‘buy-in’ of schools, as schools can see the positive impact of the HOA.

“... the MH strand will definitely have a longer-term impact on schools’ willingness and confidence to access services and increase their engagement with these. Schools’ confidence to access training has increased and it may be more likely they will now utilise services that are out there or employ their own MH support...”

Structures of oversight, monitoring and evaluation are important aspects of the legacy of the HOA programme. The HOA legacy is a change of attitudes and behaviours towards collaboration between areas. It also ensures that new accountability structures that were produced during the HOA programme for MATs, continue.

“... support for schools to trial out new ideas but with a structure where they are held to account and able to share their projects and learning rather than left alone to their own devices...”

Other areas discussed in terms of legacy included the positive impact on pupils, and the belief that schools engaging with the HOA will be in a better position to make the most of future external funding. Finally, Covid-19 posed a significant threat to the legacy of the HOA in terms of creating staff absences, higher staff turnover, and stalling projects. Despite this threat, there is still evidence of the HOA programme having a legacy impact on schools.

“... there will be significant amount of legacy, it’s a frustration that we couldn’t really drive that forward...”

“... the training..., the practice that we’ve done here, the resource will last when the HOA is finished in those areas...”

“... what we have realized through the HOA work is that we can be more strategic with how we spend our money to create more bespoke interventions for students.... So, I think that is the

Learning from HOA Sustainability and Legacy Evaluation

Based on the exploration of data provided by the HOA team, the interviews and focus group conducted across priorities, delivery team members and partnership board members; there is strong evidence that the HOA initiated cultural changes that will be sustained across Hastings. Particularly in the maths and literacy priorities, schools have evidenced a commitment to funding the HOA projects. However, despite the HOA’s sustainable model, working to embed learning across school staff, there is significant challenge with regards to staff retention. Staff mobility and the expensive nature of projects and interventions will be key challenges in the continued legacy of the HOA programme. The legacy and sustainability of the HOA’s progress is currently at the forefront of programme implementation.

Year 5 of the programme was not within the scope of this evaluation. However, maths and literacy, inclusion, twinning, attendance, broadening horizons, and mental health priorities continued to be funded into 2022, Year 5 of the programme. Aims in Year 5 include to implement a legacy structure with a particular focus on secondary school improvement, to develop ‘light-touch’ systems of support to further embed and sustain maths and literacy projects, and to continue supporting a self-sustaining partnership of community organisations and schools to progress enrichment activities. Furthermore, Year 5 of the programme ensured the continued delivery of high-quality mental health support and utilisation of evidence-based practices to support self-improving schools within a wider collaborative system. To this end, the HOA has established a hierarchy of governance, including working groups for priorities that feedback to the partnership board. In addition, two new strands have been introduced to address gaps identified in Year 4 of the programme. The Transition priority aims to improve the experiences of pupils during their transition from primary to secondary school, where pupils

tend to lose academic progress. The other strand that has been introduced is Secondary School Improvement. Secondary schools have been identified as fragile in their engagement, making less progress in comparison to primary schools. Therefore, this new priority emphasises engagement of secondary schools across Hastings.

Based on the analysis of data collected, the HOA programme's legacy will involve:

- The continuation of established networks/ connections and partnerships between individual staff members and between schools and community/ local organisations.
- The continuation of established models of practice for Mathematics Mastery in engaging schools, with a particular emphasis on the importance of Manipulatives and guidance from the Sussex Math Hub.
- The continuation of established models of teaching and learning in literacy, particularly for schools utilising Destination Reader, Daily Supported Reader, and Accelerated Reader.
- The continuation of connections and partnerships between secondary schools in Hastings and the wider area through the established area Secondary School Partnership.
- The legacy of staff training cascades; although, this is challenged by staff turnover.
- A sense of community across Hastings community organisations, schools, and local authority, that was not evident before the HOA programme began.
- High expectations from the community in terms of enrichment opportunities over the Summer and during school time.
- Ongoing work to engage parents/carers utilising creative methods of communication and involvement.
- The HOA programme has evidenced the positive impact and progress of HOA interventions, projects, and approaches, and therefore there is firm buy-in for schools, and continued commitment to sustain the delivery of projects. However, the availability of funding, and financial planning is a challenge for continued engagement.

Overall Conclusion

The HOA programme has fulfilled almost all the initial delivery aims planned in collaboration with DfE (2017). In some areas, it has gone on to surpass its targets. The HOA has shown positive progress prior to and during Covid-19, with its flexible, adaptive approach to complexity and cultural systems change across Hastings. The HOA created nurturing relationships, networks and partnerships that did not exist prior to programme conception and promoted an environment where the Hastings community can share knowledge and learn from each other. These indicate the HOA programme as a successful complex place-based approach programme. Improving teaching and learning and building capacity across schools has also created a cultural shift across Hastings towards a renewed love of learning and teaching. Across priorities, there were high levels of engagement across pupils, including those who were identified as vulnerable and disadvantaged. Those engaging had a positive experience and importantly, schools could see the impact that the HOA funded projects were having. In some areas, the programme organically grew beyond its original goals, such as creating a 'steppingstone model' to create links between communities and schools, in the Broadening Horizon's priority. The HOA programme enabled schools to use a whole school approach to supporting pupils and their environment.

The HOA programme worked across the whole system (e.g., schools, families, individuals, community providers, and the local authority), to improve social mobility, with priorities interacting with each other across time. There was also a wider culture change observed across Hastings. Communities' expectations for the availability of local resources increased. Schools' perceptions also shifted. Rather than being sceptical, schools actively engaged with the programme as the HOA progressed.

The bespoke nature of HOA funded interventions and projects ensured schools ownership and buy-in, which has resulted in a strong continued commitment from schools. Legacy and sustainability are a strong focus for the HOA delivery team as the HOA programme comes to an end in 2022.

Evidence collected in this report indicates there has been significant promising progress made in improving social mobility for pupils in Hastings and beyond (e.g., twinning), particularly for those who are facing multiple disadvantages.

Appendix 1: Detailed Evaluation of HOA Delivery Process

Number of projects

Across all priorities, 58 projects were delivered between Year 1 and Year 4 (2018-2021). Approximately half of these projects (29) were shared within the literacy (15) projects and the broadening horizons (14) projects, priorities. There were 3 to 8 projects in other priorities. Where there were fewer number of projects (e.g., maths and mental health priorities), the projects were large in scale and reach. Tables 5-8 in [Appendix 3](#) at the end of this section gives details of each project.

The scale and reach of projects showed variation within and between priorities and over time. For instance, 7 out of 15 Literacy projects worked with fewer schools/settings (i.e., 4 or less schools and/or settings) with a more focused approach (see Table 4 in [Appendix 2](#)). Other projects had a wider reach (i.e., with a range from 5 to 20 schools and/or settings in Hastings). As seen in Table 4 ([Appendix 2](#)) projects taking a twinning approach had a much wider reach especially in the recovery priority (e.g., 20 Secondary Schools and 27 Primary Schools across East Sussex).

Target Pupil population

Across all projects, the target pupil population of the HOA ranged from 4 to 25 years of age (i.e., EYFS, KS1 to KS4, and Post-16) with variations across priorities and programme years. Across priorities, 27.5% of the projects (16 out of 58 projects) were universal targeting all pupils in Hastings, whereas others had specific target groups. Across all priorities and programme years, KS2 and KS3 pupils (i.e., 8 – 14 years of age) were the most often targeted groups, in 45 of 58 projects.

Delivery strategy

The HOA delivery strategy utilised a place-based approach consisting of targeted support e.g., Key Worker Support (attendance, inclusion, mental health) and universal approaches e.g., 'Mathematics Mastery' (maths). The HOA has also encouraged a whole-town perspective and continuous community involvement through its literacy and attendance campaigns, Attendance Charter, and broadening horizons projects. The HOA has also provided opportunities for schools to create their own initiatives e.g., 'KS4 Intervention' (literacy), 'Raising Aspirations Through Language' (literacy), PRIDE Centre (attendance and inclusion).

Pre-existing vs new projects

Delivery of the HOA had an evidence-based approach in identifying and developing projects with a strong emphasis on bespoke strategies. This is an indicator of the HOA's understanding of local strengths, need, and the collective experience in supporting local communities. The HOA utilised existing work in Hastings, e.g., i-Rock services (mental health), and the Hastings Maths Project (maths). Of 58 HOA projects, 36 were evidence-based and pre-existed within or beyond Hastings, e.g., parental support (mental health), and Reading Recovery (recovery). The rest of the projects were newly set up, e.g., school enrichment programme (broadening horizons), and Hastings Attendance Charter (attendance).

Target groups beyond pupils

The HOA has taken a whole system approach to deliver its original aims and improve social mobility. Across all priorities and programme years, projects targeted school staff (i.e., senior leadership teams (SLTs), teachers, teaching assistants), practitioners, parents, and wider community. For instance, 43 of 58 projects had multiple target groups. Working with groups of practitioners, school staff, parents, and pupils in Hastings helped HOA to develop shared practice, shared language and capacity building in Hastings.

Stakeholder involvement

The HOA projects identified and recruited expert support involving both locally based and national expertise in the design and delivery of the projects. This wide range of expert support was brought together locally through training. Combining local capacity with external support helped to develop shared local ownership of the programme whilst ensuring a flexible delivery model across priorities and programme years.

Methods of delivery

The HOA utilised multiple delivery models. The most common delivery methods that were used across priorities and programme years were: intensive training and coaching offers to school staff; establishing working relationships with local community organisations; creating action groups across Hastings; providing comprehensive resource packs for parents; and working directly with pupils.

In order to deliver its original aims, the HOA has taken a strategic asset-based approach to improving social mobility. The HOA has supported initiatives to challenge systemic inequalities amongst disadvantaged pupils, e.g., taking enrichment activities to those in the nine most deprived wards of Hastings, to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. They have also employed initiatives with an early intervention focus, e.g., upskilling, and training in teaching.

Timescales and sustainability

The HOA projects' duration ranged from six weeks (e.g., [Lexonik](#) in literacy) to continuous implementation (e.g., Hastings Maths Project in Maths) with some of them having multiple iterations (e.g., Whole school approach in Mental health). The HOA has been flexible in achieving its delivery aims, to ensure projects can be implemented even in the context of Covid-19. Whilst Covid-19 resulted in pausing some of the HOA projects, the HOA responded quickly, repurposing available funds to adapt to the emerging and shifting needs of Hastings schools during the pandemic. The HOA team ensured that as many offers and as much support as possible could continue. Schools continued to implement their projects virtually, evidencing the flexible nature of HOA project delivery. Schools benefited from continued support of the HOA while adapting to new needs during Covid-19, such as creating new, hybrid approaches to learning, utilising online platforms such as MyOn! to monitor Accelerated Reader.

Appendix 2: Full Breakdown of All the HOA Projects

Table 4. Details of the HOA projects across all priorities.

Priority	Project Name	Funding Period				Funding Body ¹	Pupil Target ²	HOA delivery through ³	Method(s) of delivery ⁴	Whether evidence-based ⁵	Reach as of May 2021 or latest report ⁶
		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021						
Literacy	Improving Literacy Outcomes for Disadvantaged Children in Early Years Foundation Stage in Hastings		x			SSIF	EYFS ⁷ - KS1 ⁸ pupils	school staff, parents & pupils	training, auditing, direct intervention, & workshops	Yes	15 Primary Schools (PSs)
Literacy	Real Creative Project		x			HOA	EYFS pupils	EYFS practitioners	training	Yes	6 nurseries, 1 pre-school, & 1 community setting
Literacy	Easy Peasy Project		x			HOA	EYFS pupils	pupils & parents	direct intervention & home support	No	1 nursery & 5 PSs
Literacy	Get Hastings Reading Campaign		x	x		HOA	all pupils in Hastings	whole town	campaign	Yes	all Hastings
Literacy	Early Years: Speech Language and Communication		x	x	x	HOA	EYFS - KS1 pupils	EYFS practitioners. keyworkers	training & model of practice	No	5 nurseries & 4 PSs
Literacy	Mind the Gap/Raising Aspirations Through Language		x	x	x	HOA	KS2 & Year 7 pupils	school staff	teacher research group	Yes	2 PSs & 1 Secondary Schools (SSs)
Literacy	Communication for Learning			x		HOA	KS1 - KS4 pupils	school staff, pupils, & parents	Training & direct intervention	No	2 SEND ⁹ schools
Literacy	Bedrock Learning			x		HOA	KS4 pupils	KS4 pupils	online direct intervention	No	1 SS

Literacy	Destination Reader/ Daily Supported Reader			x	x	HOA	KS1- KS3 pupils	school staff	training & access to resources	No	10 PSs & 2 SSs
Literacy	Accelerated Reader			x	x	HOA	KS1- KS3 pupils	school English team & parents	training, engagement & access to resources	No	12 PSs & 3 SSs
Literacy	Lexonik			x	x	HOA	KS3 pupils	school staff	training & access to resources	No	2 SSs
Literacy	Vocab Instruction Programme			x	x	HOA	KS2 & KS3 pupils	school staff	training & mentoring & model of practice	Yes	3 PSs & 1 SS
Literacy	I Can Understand It, Speak It, & Use It				x	HOA	KS1 pupils	school staff & pupils	training & direct intervention	No	4 PSs
Literacy	KS4 Intervention				x	HOA	KS4 pupils receiving pupil premium	pupils & school staff	direct intervention	Yes	20 pupils & 2 subject mentors
Literacy	Twinning (Destination Reader and Daily Supported Reader)				x	HOA	KS1 - KS3 pupils	school staff	training and access to resources	No	10 PSs & 1 SS
Priority	Project Name	Funding Period				Funding Body ¹	Pupil Target ²	HOA delivery through ³	Method(s) of delivery ⁴	Whether evidence-based ⁵	Reach as of May 2021 or latest report ⁶
		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021						
Math	Hastings Maths Project		x	x	x	HOA	KS1 - KS4 pupils	school staff & specialist leaders in education	training, resources, coaching, & networking	No	14 PSs, 4 SSs, & 2 SEND schools

Math	Get Further 16+		x	x	x	HOA	KS5 pupils (re-sitting maths GCSE)	pupils & practitioners	direct intervention	Yes	1 college
Math	Twinning Mathematics Mastery Approach across Area Group 3 schools (AG3) ¹⁰				x	HOA	KS1-KS4 pupils	school staff & specialist leaders in education	training, resources, coaching, & networking	No	unclear
Priority	Project Name	Funding Period				Funding Body ¹	Pupil Target ²	HOA delivery through ³	Method(s) of delivery ⁴	Whether evidence-based ⁵	Reach as of May 2021 or latest report ⁶
		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021						
BH ¹¹	Career/Educational Visits		x	x		HOA	KS3-KS4 pupils	local organisations and employers	social networking, guidance	No	1 SS
BH	Hastings Opportunity Days		x	x	x	HOA	KS4 pupils	external academic organisations, local organisations, and employers	social networking, guidance	Yes	1 SEND, 4 SSs, & more than 20 local businesses in person across 2019-2020. 21 SS and 1 PS online in 2020-2021
BH	Motivational Speakers		x	x		HOA	all pupils in Hastings	community members & independent speakers	guidance	No	17 schools
BH	Online Learning (initially Badge Bonanza)		x	x	x	HOA	all pupils in Hastings	school staff, pupils, & parents	resources, guidance	Yes	8 schools

BH	Additional Free Offer (Visits, community provision)		x	x		HOA	all pupils in Hastings	school staff, community organisations	guidance	No	all PSs in Hastings (apart from 1 PS)
BH	Academic Year Community Enrichment Programme		x	x	x	HOA, ELS	all pupils in Hastings	community organisations, external practitioners, school staff	direct intervention, guidance, training, social networking	No	all schools in Hastings, 19 community groups
BH	School Enrichment Programme		x	x	x	HOA, ELS	all pupils in Hastings	school staff, community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, guidance, training, social networking	Yes	all schools in Hastings
BH	Summer Holiday Transition Programme			x		HOA	KS1-KS4 pupils, families	community organisations, external practitioners, school staff	direct intervention, guidance, training, social networking	No	2 SS, 3 SEND schools, 6PSs, 10 community organisations
BH	Online and Enrichment Fund			x		HOA	all pupils in Hastings	external practitioners, school staff	direct intervention, guidance, training, social networking	Yes	2 Ss, 15 PSs, 2 SEND, 4 community organisations
BH	Remote Learning Support			x		HOA	all pupils in Hastings	school staff	resources, training, support	Yes	19 schools
BH	Term Time Enrichment Fund				x	HOA	all pupils in Hastings	community providers, practitioners	direct intervention	No	1 SS, 2 SEND, 4 PSs schools, 5 community organisations, 1 local community member

BH	Continued School and Community Programmes during Covid-19				x	HOA	all pupils in Hastings	school staff, community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, social networking	No	all schools in Hastings and previously engaging community organisations
BH	Holiday Activities and Food Fund				x	HAF	KS1-KS2 pupils on FSM	community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, social networking	No	5 PSs, 15 community organisations
BH	Summer Holiday Programme				x	HOA, ELS	pupils in Hastings 9 most deprived wards	local community providers	direct intervention, social networking	No	13 community providers, 10 community groups. 4 PSs
Priority	Project Name	Funding Period				Funding Body¹	Pupil Target²	HOA delivery through³	Method(s) of delivery⁴	Whether evidence-based⁵	Reach as of May 2021 or latest report⁶
		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021						
MH ¹²	Expansion of the i-Rock service		x	x		HOA	KS4+ pupils	pupils & practitioner	access to resources & direct intervention	No	1,229 pupils
MH	SWIFT service & Operation Encompass		x	x		HOA	all pupils in Hastings	school staff	training & resources	Yes	all schools in Hastings
MH	Parenting support		x	x		HOA	all pupils in Hastings	parents	direct intervention	No	2,445 parents

MH	Emotional Wellbeing Key Worker Service		x	x	x	HOA	KS2 & KS3 pupils	pupils & parents	direct intervention	Yes	377 pupils across 11 schools
MH	Whole School Approach			x	x	HOA	all pupils in Hastings	school staff	consultation, guidance, training, & intervention	No	13 PSs, 3 SSs, & 1 college
MH	KnowKnives crime awareness		x	x		HOA	KS3 - KS5 pupils	pupils & school staff	campaign, training, & guidance	Yes	3 SSs, 1 SEND school & 100 community-based youth organisation
Priority	Project Name	Funding Period				Funding Body ¹	Pupil Target ²	HOA delivery through ³	Method(s) of delivery ⁴	Whether evidence-based ⁵	Reach as of May 2021 or latest report ⁶
		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021						
Attendance	East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS)			x		HOA	KS1-KS4 pupils	practitioner, school staff	direct intervention	No	14 schools
Attendance	Attendance Fund Activities/Projects			x		HOA	all pupils in Hastings	school staff, practitioners, external staff, parents/carers	alternative education, external resources, direct intervention	yes and no depending on the school	3 SEND, 13 PSs, 3SSs
Attendance	Education Futures Trust Keyworkers during Covid-19			x		HOA	KS1-KS2 pupils	practitioners, school staff, parents/carers	direct intervention	No	9 PSs
Attendance	Additional Mental Health Support Needs during Covid-19				x	HOA	KS4 pupils	practitioners, school staff	direct intervention, training	No	1 SS, 1 community organisation

Attendance	Hastings Attendance Charter			x	x	HOA	all pupils in Hastings	pupils, school staff, community providers, practitioners, parents/carers	campaign, guidance	Yes	All schools
Attendance	Hastings Attendance Campaign			x	x	HOA	all pupils in Hastings	schools, parents/carers, community members and organisations	campaign, resources, guidance	Yes	All schools
Priority	Project Name	Funding Period				Funding Body ¹	Pupil Target ²	HOA delivery through ³	Method(s) of delivery ⁴	Whether evidence-based ⁵	Reach as of May 2021 or latest report ⁶
		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021						
Inclusion	Education Training Centre (ETC)			x		HOA	KS3-KS4 pupils	school staff, external community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, training, external resources	Yes	1 SS
Inclusion	PRIDE Centre			x		HOA	KS2-KS4 pupils	school staff, external community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, training, external resources	Yes	1 SS

Inclusion	Social Inclusion Project (also involved in attendance via attendance funding)			x		HOA	KS2-KS4 pupils	school staff, external community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, training, external resources	Yes	1 SS
Inclusion	Alternative in-school provision (including key workers)			x	x	HOA	KS2-KS4 pupils	school staff, external community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, training, external resources	No	1 SS
Inclusion	Additional Mental Health Support Projects				x	HOA	KS3 pupils	school staff, external community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, training, external resources	Yes	1 SS, 1 community organisation
Inclusion	Twinning				x	HOA	KS3-KS4 pupils	school staff, external community providers, practitioners	direct intervention, training, external resources	Yes	8 SS
Priority	Project Name	Funding Period				Funding Body ¹	Pupil Target ²	HOA delivery through ³	Method(s) of delivery ⁴	Whether evidence-based ⁵	Reach as of May 2021 or latest report ⁶
		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021						
Recovery	Expert Readers – UoBAT				x	HOA	all pupils	school staff & pupils	training, direct intervention		1960 pupils across 7 PSs & 2 SSs

Recovery	East Sussex College Hastings Recovery Project				x	HOA	KS5 & 19+ learners	Learners	resources & direct intervention	No	3500 learners ¹³
Recovery	Forest School				x	HOA	KS2 pupils	pupils	direct intervention	No	38 pupils
Recovery	Secondary Closing the Gap				x	HOA	Year 11 pupils across East Sussex	school staff & pupils	resources, direct intervention	No	20 schools
Recovery	Primary Closing the Gap				x	HOA	Year 6 pupils across East Sussex	school staff & pupils	resources, direct intervention	No	27 schools
Recovery	School Counsellor/Therapist				x	HOA	KS1 & KS2 pupils	pupils	direct intervention	No	100 pupils ¹⁴ across 4 PSs
Recovery	After School Catch Up				x	HOA	KS2 pupils	pupils & school staff	direct intervention	No	66 pupils in 1 PS
Recovery	Reading Recovery				x	HOA	KS0 & KS1 pupils	pupils	direct intervention	No	27 pupils in 1 PS
Recovery	Catch up Support				x	HOA	KS1 - KS4 pupils	pupils	direct intervention	No	85 pupils across 2 PSs & 2 SEND schools

Notes. ¹ *Funding body* refers to whether project is funded by HOA budget or another budget, such as [Strategic School Improvement Fund](#). ² *Pupil target* indicates project's target group of pupils. This might be a direct target group such as in literacy projects, or indirect target, such as in parenting training. ³ *HOA delivery through* lists the stakeholder groups a project works with/targets at. ⁴ *delivery methods* list the systems and actions used in the process of the project. ⁵ *Yes* indicates that the project is an evidence-based pre-existing implementations whereas *no* indicates that the project is newly set up implementation. ⁶ *reach figures* show the scale of project's delivery in relation to school or individual numbers where appropriate. ⁷ *EYFS* indicates Early Years Foundation Stage. ⁸ *KS* stands for Key Stage. ⁹ *SEND* indicates Special Educational Needs and Disability. ¹⁰ Area Group 3 (AG3) - The Secondary Board is the county-wide strategic body which sets the overall vision and priorities for improvement within the secondary system and links to the Primary Board. Schools and academies work collaboratively in three area groups; AG1 (Lewes and Wealden); AG2 (Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford; AG3 (Hastings and Rother). ¹¹ *BH* stands for broadening horizons. ¹² *MH* stands for mental health. ¹³ Of these 3500 young people, 1400 learners located in Hastings and 2100 learners located in the wider East Sussex area of Eastbourne and Lewes. ¹⁴ Of these 100 pupils, 64 received one-to-one support and 36 pupils participated in group work.

Appendix 3. Individual Priority Summary Reports

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Maths Priority Summary Report

Overview of Delivery

Hastings aimed to become a centre of excellence for teaching maths; and for Hastings' pupils to achieve maths results that place them in the top half of the country. It aimed to achieve these goals through the Hastings Maths Project (HMP) implemented across Key Stages (KSs) 2-3, before expanding to KSs 1-4 in 2019-2020. The HMP took an evidence-based approach, *Mathematics Mastery*, building on previous work in Hastings by the Sussex Maths Hub. It also reached KS5 target groups e.g., the Get Further project targeted older pupils who were re-sitting their GCSEs. By working across KS1- KS4 in the HMP, the Mathematics Mastery approach was embedded in 20 Hastings schools surpassing its original delivery aims to embed the approach in all secondary schools and eight primary schools. Except for one school that dropped out of the programme by Year 4, all other Hastings schools (n=21) continued to engage with the HOA in Mathematics Mastery. Based on the available preliminary data from Year 5, the HMP has continued to make significant progress against targets and key performance indicators.

At the wider programme level, the HOA has shown excellent progress towards its maths' strand, and its related delivery aims in all areas, with the exception of two aims. The HOA programme was limited in utilising the Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund to create a STEM Hub. Additionally, there was poor parental engagement. Despite this, the maths strand was centred on a strong evidence-based approach with excellent incorporation of newly developed practice; created well-supported engagement for schools and offered a broad combination of continued personal development and training opportunities for staff.

Table 5 reflects the original aims and delivery targets for the maths priority. It also contains the number of schools who participated in the priority , and the number of target beneficiaries who were reached.

Table 5: Maths Priority Outline

Priority	Aims	Delivery Targets	Projects	Schools Participating (No./%)	Individuals Reached (No)
Maths	Hastings will be known as a centre of excellence for teaching maths and children and young people achieve maths results that place them in the top half of the country at all Key Stages (DfE, 2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support 8 primary school and all secondary school pupils in KS2-KS3. • All schools take part in maths training at chosen primary school. • All secondary schools create a STEM hub with training and support to improve STEM teaching. • A programme of networking events. • Development programme for staff teaching in Further Education • Careers fair promoting importance of maths. • The Sussex Maths Hub supports teaching and offers training and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hastings Maths Project • Get Further • Twinning 	21 of the 24 schools and one FE college in Hastings (84%)	18,734 pupils ¹⁴

¹⁴ This is the total number of pupils in Key Stage 1-4, enrolled at all engaging schools, from 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 academic years. Pupil numbers were not collected in 2019-2020 due to the pandemic and we were therefore unable to collect this data. This also does not include East Sussex College pupil data as it was not available. Therefore, the number provided will be lower than the actual number of pupils reached.

A more detailed breakdown of the projects delivered can be found in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Maths Priority Projects

Project Name	Project Description
Get Further	Get Further: Aimed to plan more efficient and effective maths lessons by analysing past papers, speaking to maths advisors, and supporting in the embedding of Mathematics Mastery approaches. The curriculum was designed to identify and close gaps in foundational student knowledge and understanding before building GCSE success. The curriculum was created to support and complement the work from the Hastings Maths Project. This project was focused on pupils re-taking their maths GCSE.
Hastings Maths Project	Hastings Maths Project: Lead by one Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) and the Sussex Maths Hub. The Hastings Maths Project is certainly a long-term project that aimed to embed expert teaching and learning about maths across the whole school. Mathematics Mastery is not an intervention, but rather an evidence-based whole school approach to teaching and learning about maths that includes training and implementation support for school staff and parents/carers.
Twinning	Twinning: Aimed to spread learning and the Hastings Maths Project to the broader area, led by Hastings schools and the Sussex Maths Hub.

Progress and Perceived Progress

Progress towards current maths priority targets:

84% of Hastings schools engaged in Mastery Approaches.

There are 21 schools including the FE college (84%) were involved in implementing the Hastings Maths Project as one school dropped out in 2021. In January 2021, two additional schools were supported by the Sussex Maths Hub. While this is a high number of schools and colleges engaging, the HOA programme has not managed to engage all schools in Hastings, which was their target.

The HOA programme aimed for schools in Hastings to be experts in teaching maths for mastery approaches, as measured through evaluation surveys following the training of senior leaders, maths leaders and teachers.

Schools utilised the Mastery approach. Staff reported feeling more confident based on the collective surveys and feedback gathered throughout the year. Collectively, staff across 14 schools implementing the Mastery approach, rated confidence in delivering Mathematics Mastery: 4.3 out of a score range of 1 to 5; confidence in peers delivering Mathematics Mastery: 3.8; and feeling supported by SLT in adopting the Mastery approach: 4.5.

The HOA programme aimed for pupils in Hastings to be in the top half of the country in maths attainment at Key Stage 2 and 4, with disadvantaged pupils making more progress than disadvantaged children nationally.

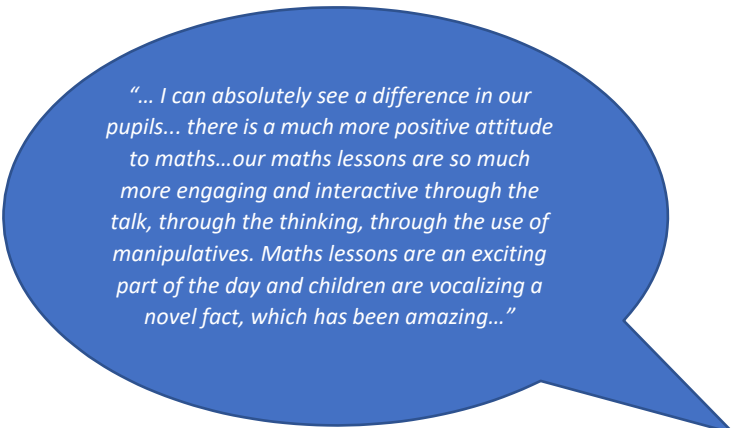
Prior to Covid-19, there were clear improvements in Hastings schools' maths outcomes ([HOA, 2021](#)).

Data for programme in Year 4 is not available at this point, due to continued Covid-19 related interruptions at the school level, regional and national level. Thus, progress across Year 4, is not possible to evaluate. Staff reported that enjoyment in maths has improved, as well as expectations of classroom practices. Schools reported good progress in terms of maths outcomes and pupil enjoyment of maths. They reported that not only do pupils feel more confident, but that they are maintaining their levels of attainment, despite disruptions caused by Covid-19. Across schools there was a greater understanding, enjoyment of maths, and improved quality in pedagogy that has led to current positive academic outcomes for pupils.

Perceived Early Outcomes of Maths Priority Work:

Both the HMP and the Get Further16+ projects made significant advances in improving outcomes for Hastings and in embedding Mathematics Mastery across schools.

These observations were also supported by numeric assessments. In the first years of the HMP, KS2 and KS3 pupils in Hastings showed a gradual increase in receiving age expected standards for maths (see [HOA, 2021](#) for more details). This was especially prominent for KS2 pupils and for those facing multiple disadvantages. This is crucial as pupils facing multiple disadvantages were at most risk of not achieving the expected standards for maths. In the Get Further



"... I can absolutely see a difference in our pupils... there is a much more positive attitude to maths...our maths lessons are so much more engaging and interactive through the talk, through the thinking, through the use of manipulatives. Maths lessons are an exciting part of the day and children are vocalizing a novel fact, which has been amazing..."

16+ project, the majority (80%) of the pupils re-taking GCSEs had an increase in their scores. Observations about increased pupils' motivation and engagement in maths classes were also shared by the key members of the programme. These findings were also supported by evidence in existing HOA documents. Consistently, there is strong evidence for improving the quality of maths teaching in schools that participated in the maths projects. Multiple stakeholders reported increased teacher confidence and competence on maths teaching, which, in turn, improved overall maths pedagogy in schools. Despite the challenges experienced in engaging with parents, utilising creative methods helped to improve parents' involvement in the HMP.

Conclusion

- The maths priority has surpassed delivery targets and demonstrated positive outcomes for pupils across all Key Stages and staff.
- The new approach to teaching and learning maths has been embedded in 84% of schools in Hastings, including the FE college, providing staff with training and resources to improve the quality of their maths provision. Therefore, there is evidence of whole system change in Hastings schools in their approach to teaching maths in the classroom.
- Preliminary data suggests improvements to maths outcomes for pupils in schools who continue to engage in the HMP and with Sussex Maths Hub.
- In Year 5, the maths and literacy projects continue to be implemented, with additional funding. This included funding for the continuation of the 'twinning' project. There is therefore a strong sustainability plan in place for the maths project and Mathematics Mastery, which has demonstrated the importance of using evidence-based practice to change whole system approaches to teaching and learning.

Literacy Priority Summary Report

Overview of Delivery

The literacy priority was successful in implementing the original delivery aims of the HOA, which can be found in Table 7. Aspects of literacy were built across age groups, utilising more short-term approaches such as the 'Easy Peasy' project in targeted groups, blended with long-term approaches to improve reading, phonics, vocabulary, speech language and communication in targeted groups and across the whole school (e.g., Accelerated Reader, Destination Reader, Daily Supported Reader) and town (e.g., Get Hastings Reading). There was a mixture of delivery, including training and support from Hackney Services for Schools, Renaissance Learning, Bedrock Learning and Lexonik. Some schools created their own interventions, and these were delivered by other external experts such as University students and local former pupils e.g., KS4 Intervention. There was an emphasis in all projects on pupils not achieving their expected grade, and those who were vulnerable and disadvantaged. Projects were delivered in school time (e.g., Destination Reader) and in some cases, after school (e.g., KS4 Intervention).

There were 15 projects running throughout the literacy priority, including twinning. It is our understanding these were new to Hastings schools, and they had not been used prior to HOA implementation. A detailed account of the aims and projects of the Literacy priority are shown in Table 7 and Table 8 below. In the following section, we provide a brief evaluation of the delivery of the Literacy priority.

4,515 pupils have been involved in HOA's literacy projects. Furthermore, 884 school staff (teaching assistants, subject staff, and senior leadership teams) were trained. There were higher levels of staff engagement in Accelerated Reader, Destination Reader/Daily Supported Reader, and the Get Hastings Reading campaign than in e.g., Lexonik or independent school literacy programmes. Projects in literacy have equipped school staff with learning toolkits and bespoke resources, designed by the local authority. Pathway resources and monitoring tool interventions provided in the Early Years support for the speech language and communication project were used by 95% of schools in Year 4 of the programme.

Covid-19 did not fundamentally change who was targeted across ongoing projects, but did change how projects were delivered, as there was increasing emphasis on online/remote monitoring and evaluation, rather than face-to-face work. During Covid-19, schools continued implementing and testing their own interventions, supported by HOA, such as 'KS4 Intervention', 'Raising Aspirations through Language' and the 'Vocabulary Instructional Programme', focusing on a diverse array of need across targeted pupils, e.g., male pupils receiving Pupil Premium. Consistently planning and adapting delivery has been a key element that has aided progress of schools in implementing their literacy outcomes during Covid-19.

Table 7: Literacy Priority Outline

Priority	Aims	Targets	Number of Schools (No./%)	Number of Pupils (No.)
Literacy	Children and young people in Hastings have the literacy skills they need to make the most of every opportunity and achieve English results in the top half of the country across all Key Stages (DfE, 2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town-wide literacy campaign across the whole community, including all schools and pupils of all ages. • Improve teaching of phonics in all schools. • Improve teaching of literacy from age 3-7 in 15 target schools. • Improve parental engagement and developing early literacy in the home by offering training to all practitioners working with families. 	24 schools and 1 FE college in Hastings (100%).	4,515 pupils ¹⁵

¹⁵ This number may include the same individual more than once. Additionally, this number does not include pupil numbers from projects where there was no data available and therefore the number provided may be lower than the actual number of pupils reached.

Table 8: Literacy Priority Projects

Project Name	Description
Get Hastings Reading Campaign	This was a long-term initiative with twin tracks. Phase 1 until March 2020 and Phase 2 until March 2028. Phase 1 included, recruiting literacy champions and advocates, and delivering literacy programmes while engaging partners across the community to help embed literacy initiatives, raise awareness of the importance of literacy and improve literacy outcomes across the town and with targeted groups. Phase 2 was about securing additional funding for these activities and developing multiple ownership, for continued impact and longevity. This campaign included local community support such as Culture Shift, Education Futures Trust, and i-Rock mental health services.
Early Years Speech and Language Pathway	This focused on supporting young children with speech, language, and communication needs using evidence-based training and resources to promote literacy in the home and school. Resources had already been developed prior to the pathway.
Destination Reader/ Daily Supported Reader	Destination Reader is aimed at KS2 and includes two days of core leadership training (x2 delegates per school), programme materials, access to online resources and implementation support. Daily Supported Reader is a similar teaching approach to Destination Reader, aimed at KS1 and those who find reading challenging in KS2. It is a whole class programme that can be used in 1:1 or small groups. Children can read stories of their own, then learn to respond and engage to the stories, they are taught to process information autonomously and learn to problem solve more deeply, through this programme. There are also systematic approaches to staff training.
Accelerated Reader	Using online quizzes, pupils find a book they want to read, that matches their literacy needs. After they finish the book, pupils take the Star Reader quiz to understand their literacy progress. This allows the school staff to set future goals and provide better support for pupils.
Lexonik	Encompasses sound training and is an intensive, highly structured programme for low literacy skills and weak vocabulary knowledge.
Bedrock Learning	It can be used across primary and secondary pupils of all abilities and aims to help schools and parents/carers to build literacy skills in children and young people. Like other approaches, it includes bespoke support and 'dashboards' to monitor progress.
Mind the Gap/Raising Aspirations Through Language	This aimed to develop vocabulary, improve evidence-based strategies for teaching vocabulary, create an innovative and motivated team of practitioners, ensure all staff have good curriculum knowledge and ensure KS2 and KS3 knowledge is improving so that pupils reach age-appropriate levels of attainment across the school year. In the fourth year of the programme, this project became Raising Aspirations through Language, which aimed to build on the successes of previous years and continues to embed practices.

Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF): Outcomes for Disadvantaged Children	This project aimed to accelerate progress for targeted children towards their expected learning goal, reduce the gap in reading levels between disadvantage pupils and their peers and to improve the skills, knowledge, and confidence of Teaching Assistants to support language developments in pupils. Strands included professional development, pupil assessments, classroom audits, Level 4 speech and language training, narrative therapy small group interventions and parent/carer workshops.
Real Creative Project	This project uses the National Children's Bureau (NCB) 'Making it REAL' programme to develop early literacy skills, utilising partnerships with artists and cultural spaces to embed creativity and cultural engagement in literacy development. The project partners included Hastings Museum, Jerwood Gallery, De La Warr Pavilion, ESCC libraries, East Sussex Early Years Improvement Team, Culture Shift and the NCB. Including REAL training days, network meetings, home visits, literacy events and creative training days.
Communication for Learning	Delivered social communication programmes, such as the Talking Together programme. Consider different assessment models such as the Hexagon system to assess pupils needs. Utilise Rainbow Awards and parental engagement and provide online tools and website development. Finally, staff were trained up in interventions such as Lego Therapy and Makaton.
Easy Peasy Project	Improving speech, language, and communication in Early Years Foundational Stage (EYFS). Eventually became a homework task for most schools taking part, rather than a school approach implemented during the school day.
I Can Understand It, Speak It, and Use It	Providing accessible speech, language, and communication support; a fair and equitable route for pupils into literacy and learning within one MAT. Implemented a specialist bespoke approach to provide regular on-site provision and support, at manageable times and in a familiar setting. This includes universal services such as: improving teacher understanding and developing a friendly classroom; targeted services that were supported and delivered by Teaching Assistants; therapists and specialist services supported via therapists.
Vocab Instruction Programme	This project aimed to create a fully resourced vocabulary instruction programme with a suite of resources. Aimed to benefit 400 pupils with high quality teaching and literacy opportunities and train up to 50 teachers via INSET days by the end of the programme.
KS4 Intervention	A pilot scheme, which could be embedded at other schools in the trust if successful. Aimed to target year 10 pupil premium boys with target grades of 6/7 who are consistently underperforming. Ran small group interventions (maximum of 5 students) supported by trained university students. Intervention helped students with the reading and writing skills required for English language.
Twinning (Destination Reader and Daily Supported Reader)	10 Portsmouth primary schools were supported in accessing Destination Reader and Daily Supported Reading.

Progress and Perceived Progress

Progress towards current Literacy Priority Targets:

Hastings's pupils aimed to be in the top half of the country in literacy at Key Stage 2 and 4, with disadvantaged pupils making more progress than disadvantaged children nationally.

Prior to Covid-19, in Years 1-3, there was good progress towards this target ([HOA, 2021](#))

In 2017-18 the percentage of children across Hastings who reached the expected level of literacy at KS2 increased by 13.1%, to 74.5%. In 2019, following national trends, this decreased to 72.9% of pupils, compared to 73.2% nationally. However, nationally there was a larger percentage decrease of 2%. In 2019, disadvantaged pupils at KS2 exceeded the national average with 66.4% of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, compared to 62.3% nationally. In Hastings, 72.9% of disadvantaged pupils in KS2 achieved the expected standard in writing, which was above the national average.

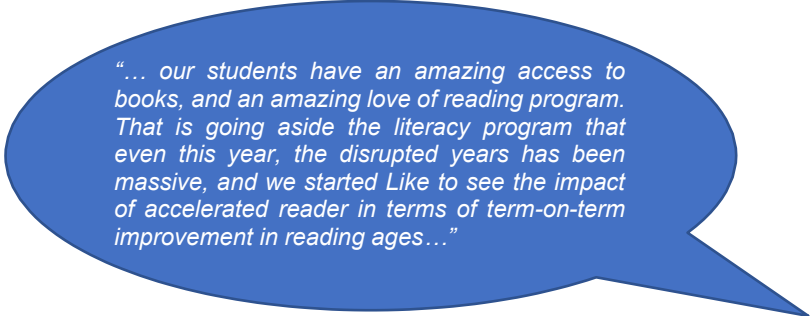
Covid-19 has made it difficult to understand the long-term impact of these projects. Impact and progress of this will be better understood later, when there has been less disruption in monitoring and evaluation. Published data is also not yet available nationally.

For those schools participating in specific literacy programmes, projects aimed to close the gap in progress in reading for disadvantaged pupils within each participating school and nationally

Prior to Covid-19 indications that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and the general pupil populace had narrowed generally in Hastings based on the previously mentioned data.

Perceived Early Outcomes of Literacy Priority Work:

Across Literacy projects, improvements in attitudes towards reading (e.g., love of reading), and improvements in reading ages were observed by the key stakeholders of the delivery team who were interviewed.



"... our students have an amazing access to books, and an amazing love of reading program. That is going aside the literacy program that even this year, the disrupted years has been massive, and we started Like to see the impact of accelerated reader in terms of term-on-term improvement in reading ages..."

Previous HOA reports evidenced improvements in Literacy across Hastings pupils (see [HOA, 2021](#) for more details). Accelerated Reader and Destination Reader projects demonstrated particularly positive outcomes. For example, in one secondary school that took part in Accelerated Reader (180 pupils), a 90% pass rate and growth in the reading age of up to 2.8 years were reported. On the other hand, there was a mixed picture of progress that emerged across schools during Covid-19 since March 2020. For instance, target pupils' engagement with online literacy resources ranged from 24% to 67% across secondary schools during Covid-19. Interviewees also acknowledged that progress in terms of measurable outcomes, will be delayed due to Covid-19, and there will therefore be delays in understanding the true impact of the HOA. Interviews also demonstrated emerging positive outcomes for parents and schools, by providing opportunities to build confidence and competence in providing support at home. This was especially true for parents with EYFS pupils.

Conclusions

- Preliminary data shows that the Literacy priority has successfully increased academic outcomes and improved a love of learning.
- Covid-19 will delay our knowledge of the full extent of the impact of the literacy priority.
- As highlighted in the maths summary report, the literacy priority continues to be funded in Year 5 of the programme, with funding being allocated to the “twinning” priority. Importantly, Year 5 of the HOA project also introduces a new priority: ‘Secondary School Improvement’. In this priority, literacy and maths projects are being embedded to raise standards at KS3 and KS4 in Hastings. Therefore, there is a strong push to improve the impact of the HOA programme’s literacy and maths projects in secondary schools before the end of programme funding.
- The renewed focus on secondary schools will further embed HOA funded and supported literacy in schools, improve networking and collaboration and collaboratively work across priorities to improve attendance.

Broadening Horizons Priority Report

Overview of Delivery Process

Projects met and surpassed targets and key performance across the first three programme years in terms of engagement with enrichment opportunities (see [HOA, 2021](#) for more information). In 2018, 60% of participants were pupils with disadvantaged backgrounds. This increased to 79% in 2019, evidencing higher engagement and enjoyment of activities. Moreover, all schools ran their own enrichment opportunities that spanned outdoor activities, creative opportunities, academic and IT related activities and sporting activities.

Broadening horizons was significantly impacted by Covid-19, in terms of the ability to conduct aspirational visits, provide motivational speakers and support Hastings Opportunity Days. An immediate response to Covid-19 was the Summer Holiday Transition project, which was implemented in Year 4. The project supported 770 pupils and 37 families. Of this number, 442 were receiving pupil premium, emphasising support of those facing multiple disadvantages during the pandemic. There were around 8,254 pupils supported in total across enrichment opportunities, the transition programme, summer holidays and the continued free offer.

Engagement with the National Citizen Service¹⁶ ran from 2016 to 2019 with 247 pupils participating. The number of pupils involved in the project increased four times over the years, e.g., 23 pupils in 2016 vs 83 pupils in 2019. As expected, the numbers significantly decreased in 2020 during the pandemic, e.g., 6 pupils in 2020. Although reaching those who are most disadvantaged was one of the strengths of this project, again Covid-19 conditions resulted in limited access to projects for them e.g., Hastings Opportunity Days. This was mainly due to the project being held online during a time when schools were closed, and therefore limiting some pupils' engagement.

Table 9: Broadening Horizons Priority Outline

Priority	Description	Targets	Number of Schools (No./%)	Number of Pupils (No.)
Broadening Horizons	Young people are inspired, motivated, and equipped for adult life (DfE, 2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All secondary and college aged young people have at least four meaningful encounters with employers over the life of the Opportunity Area programme • All school and college young people participate in regular extra-curricular enrichment activity. • Young people have positive attitudes towards extra-curricular enrichment activity, as measured through regular surveys. 	24 schools and 1 FE college in Hastings (100%) and 2 colleges outside of Hastings.	35,903 pupils ¹⁷

¹⁶ National Citizen Service is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to improve personal and social development for 15–17-year-olds in England and Northern Ireland: <https://wearencs.com/>

¹⁷ This number may include the same individual more than once, as it is the total number of engaging pupils from all relevant strands of the Enrichment priority.

Table 10: Broadening Horizons Priority Projects

Project Name		Description
Free Offers and Opportunities	Aspirational Activities	Broadening horizons also had a free offer for schools which included inspirational; activities such as high-quality speakers for schools, healthy living workshops, free short support lessons and HOA funded educational visits. There was also a Canary Wharf Careers visit for four mainstream schools. In addition, the HOA has been working in collaboration with the Careers and Enterprise Company to ensure an extensive programme that addresses relevant needs.
	Career/Educational Visits	
	Hastings Opportunity Days	
	Motivational Speakers	
	Online Learning (Badge Bonanza)	
Additional Free Offer (Visits, community provision)		
Community Enrichment Programme		The enrichment strand included summer enrichment programmes across the community and school enrichment programmes during the academic year. These included activities for children and young people that incorporated elements of maths and literacy, mental health and physical health. A Summer holiday programme was also focused on the 9 most deprived wards in Hastings in 2021.
School Enrichment Programme		
Term Time Enrichment Fund		
Summer Holiday Programme		
Transition Programme		This project occurred post the first lockdown in response to Covid-19 and made funding available for further enrichment programmes at the school and community level to build confidence and address anxieties that occurred during Covid-19. This also included funding to support and develop IT based home learning. This enabled pupils to return to school and re-engage post lockdown.
Remote Learning Support		This project supported 19 schools to access additional resources to enable pupils and their families without regular internet access, to have learning packs, additional IT hardware and software licences. Schools were able to keep in touch with pupils when schools were closed and training for staff to support remote learning.
Holiday Activities and Food Fund		Government funded programme for children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM), which ran nationally. The HOA managed the pilot for the East Sussex Local Authority and continued to work with them on the extension of the programme into the summer.

Progress and Perceived Progress

Progress towards current Broadening Horizons Targets:

Over 4,000 additional enrichment places were filled by pupils in schools and the community

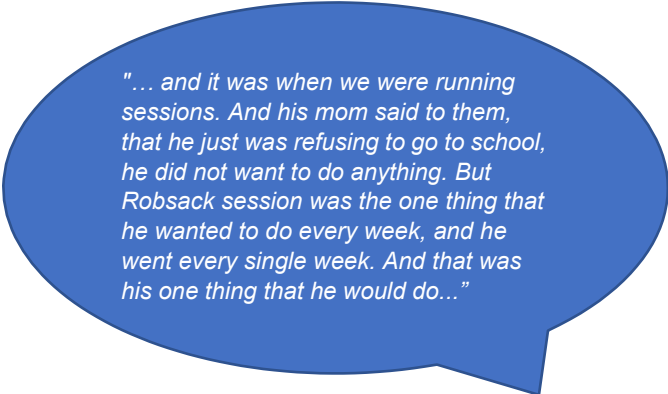
Broadening horizons met and surpassed its targets and key performance across the first 1-3 programme years, in terms of engagement with enrichment opportunities ([HOA, 2021](#)).

In Year 4 of the programme alone, there were 8,254 pupils supported (including enrichment activity places filled) across enrichment opportunities, the transition programme, summer holidays and the continued free offer. Good progress has been made, especially despite the restrictions created by Covid-19.

This aim has been met and based on preliminary data and interviews; engagement continues to grow.

Perceived Early Outcomes of Broadening Horizons Work:

All schools, colleges, and many community organisations benefited from the projects and enrichment activities of the broadening horizons priority. Existing data reported by staff, parents and pupils demonstrated increased enjoyment and confidence after taking part in enrichment activities in the community and/or school.



"... and it was when we were running sessions. And his mom said to them, that he just was refusing to go to school, he did not want to do anything. But Robsack session was the one thing that he wanted to do every week, and he went every single week. And that was his one thing that he would do..."

Although the direct impact of the projects on pupils is not currently evident, there is strong evidence that this priority had an indirect effect on the improvement of both academic and psychosocial pupil outcomes.

Conclusion

- Broadening horizons has continued to engage pupils during the pandemic, evidencing the strong interest the community has in taking part in community based and school-based activities.
- In Year 5 of the programme, broadening horizons has received additional funding. Similarly, to the maths and literacy priorities, funding has been allocated to 'Twinning' of aspirational activities and offers.
- As broadening horizons continues, there will be an emphasis on sharing learning across East Sussex, especially for pupils living in areas of high deprivation.
- There is clear and positive evidence that providing pupils and schools with more opportunities to learn and participate in aspirational activities has impacted attendance positively. Furthermore, there is emerging evidence that pupils are taking part in activities specialising in upskilling personal and academic skills. This is promising in terms of providing pupils in Hastings with the experience and confidence to enter further education or employment in the future.

Mental Health Priority Report

Overview of the Delivery Process

Five projects reached their targets except for the parenting project ([York Consulting, 2022](#)). The Emotional Wellbeing Key Worker Service was offered in 11 schools identified with the highest level of need. The project almost reached its target by 94% in Year 4 of the programme. Out of 394 KS2 and KS3 pupils targeted, 377 pupils (9 to 14 years of age) received one-to-one or group interventions with the availability of drop-in sessions during the first four years of the programme. Covid-19 is likely to be one of the reasons for the Key Worker Service not reaching its target. Those families who declined the offer (i.e., did not consent) was fifteen times higher during lock-down than it was before. On the other hand, the Expansion of the i-Rock Service project exceeded its targets and reached a wide range of beneficiaries during the programme years.

The HOA enabled i-Rock to increase its opening time to five days, and to build networking and engagement capacity within the i-Rock service. At the end of the project, i-Rock offered a service to 1,229 pupils, 44% over the originally target. Similar patterns of successful engagement of beneficiaries (pupils, schools, and practitioners) were also observed in the Whole School Work project conducted via Boingboing in 17 schools, in the KnowKnives Crime Awareness project conducted in 4 schools and 100 community-based youth settings, and in the SWIFT early intervention domestic abuse project that reached all schools in Hastings. On the other hand, the parental engagement with mental health offer was limited.

The HOA supported expansion of existing parenting programmes was delivered locally. With the overarching goal of reaching all Hastings parents set at the beginning of the programme, the project offered a range of interventions from one-off sessions with parents to more intensive and structured support for families. Although the one-off sessions reached a larger group of parents than expected (i.e., it exceeded its target by 57%), the rest of the offers did not engage parents as much as originally planned. Only 61% to 67% of target numbers for engaging parents were met. The limited engagement of parents with some aspects of this priority is similar to patterns observed in other priorities of the HOA programme.

Table 11: Mental Health Priority Outline

Priority	Aims	Targets	Number of Schools (No./%)	Number of Pupils (No.)
Mental Health	Pupils experience positive personal and social wellbeing, understand the signs of being emotionally or mentally unwell, and receive excellent support if they need it (DfE, 2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of i-Rock services. • Develop a new emotional well-being service for children aged 12-14. • Expansion of Triple P programme for parents. 	24 schools and 1 FE college in Hastings (100%)	4,121 pupils

Table 12: Mental Health Priority Projects

Project Name	Description
Expansion of the i-Rock service	This offer aimed for 40% capacity increase in this Hastings-based drop-in service for 14- to 25-year-olds. The service provides an in-house wellbeing intervention for young people, and advice and support on mental health, emotional health, wellbeing, employment, education, and housing.
Operation Encompass	Operation Encompass is an initiative that directly connects the police with schools to secure better outcomes for children who are subject or witness to police-attended incidents of domestic abuse. Rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium, and long-term effects of domestic abuse.
SWIFT service / domestic abuse / sexual risk	This is an early help service for parents and professionals in respect of pupils with experience of and/or at risk of domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse. The service includes timely information sharing, bespoke online resource toolkits and training for schools.
Parenting support	The HOA's parent support included delivery of a positive parenting programme, the Triple P. Triple P helps to strengthen the parent-child relationships through managing behaviours and preventing problems from escalating.
Emotional Wellbeing Key Worker Service	This service provided wellbeing support to pupils, primarily through a 12-week programme of one-to-one sessions with key practitioners in school.
Whole School Approach	This strand provided support and consultancy to schools for developing bespoke whole school approaches and delivering them in confidence.
KnowKnives crime awareness	This is a knife crime awareness project offering awareness and early intervention sessions especially in secondary schools.

Progress and Perceived Progress

Progress towards current Mental Health Targets:

81% of pupils accessing one to one or group work from the emotional well-being team, demonstrated improvements in their emotional wellbeing following their intervention.

The Emotional Wellbeing early intervention service created early support for pupils with an easy access in schools. Pupils who received this service through one-to-one sessions showed decreases in their anxiety and depression levels; potentially reducing their need for referral to CAMHS and other services.

Parents who have accessed support, reported greater confidence in their parenting abilities, and improvements in their relationship with their child.

Engaging parents with the parenting support offers of the HOA was a challenge. The previous evaluation of this priority has shown four reasons for this limitation: stigma to parenting interventions, lack of childcare during intervention sessions, lack of value recognition of such interventions, and historically embedded norms of limited parental engagement in Hastings schools. Despite these challenges, when parents participated in parenting support interventions, they reported progress.

Schools across Hastings engaged with the Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB) programme and reported positive impact in staff awareness of mental health problems and their capacity to respond to these.

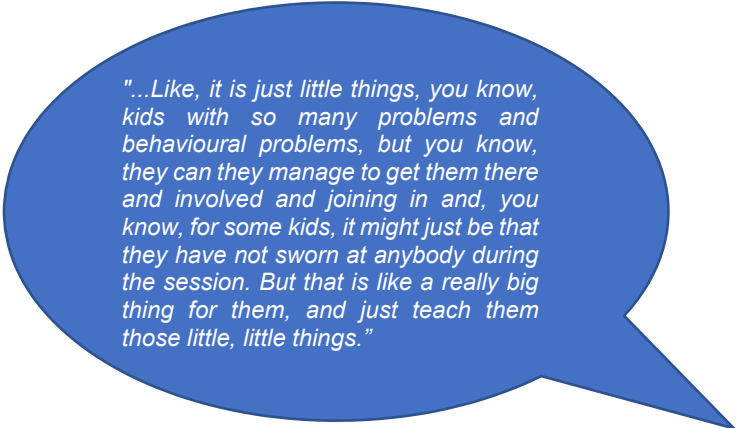
The HOA helped to embed preventative mental health and emotional wellbeing strategies in schools. School staff, where teams were operating, reported increased confidence and competence in managing pupils' emotional wellbeing. This potentially enables schools to have a greater awareness, trust, and confidence in communicating and managing emotional wellbeing issues.

Expansion of i-Rock service.

The award-winning i-Rock service was expanded to five days doubling its reach to those between 14 and 25 years old. The service offered well-being interventions with specific focuses (such as coping, suicidal thoughts, and anger management), it provided guidance and information, and signposted to different services for support. Although there is no clear evidence due to lack of data, there is a perception reported by practitioners that i-Rock offers reduced the number of referrals to more intensive interventions.

Perceived Early Outcomes of Mental Health Work:

Interviews supported learning from previous evaluations of the Mental health priority. Overall, there is a positive change observed in pupils who participated in the projects of this priority (see [HOA, 2021](#) for more details).



"...Like, it is just little things, you know, kids with so many problems and behavioural problems, but you know, they can they manage to get them there and involved and joining in and, you know, for some kids, it might just be that they have not sworn at anybody during the session. But that is like a really big thing for them, and just teach them those little, little things."

Across those who participated in the one-to-one intervention of the Key Worker Service project, 95% of pupils reported that things have changed for the better as a result of working with the service. 84% of adults around these pupils also agreed with this statement. Across those who participated in the group work of the project, 75% reported that they can use the skills they learned independently. These findings indicate positively

perceived (early) outcomes. Similar patterns are observed with the Expansion of i-Rock project. Those who engaged with i-Rock services consistently reported a feeling of calmness and safety. This finding was also supported by others who provided information.

The Whole School Approach (WSA) project facilitated schools to work on their mental health and resilience agenda as a whole school community. Capacity building within the school system was one of the initial and key principles of the WSA to make a wider impact on pupils. The evaluation of existing information revealed that staff confidence and competence in supporting positive mental health and resilience across their school community improved. Data and documents available for the Parenting Programme showed a decrease in negative outcomes (e.g., hostility, overactivity). Furthermore, multi-stakeholder reports provided anecdotal evidence for improved parental confidence and competence in dealing with and talking to pupils about mental health and resilience.

Conclusion

- Emerging evidence from the mental health priority demonstrates positive change in the mental health and wellbeing outcomes of pupils in Hastings.
- The priority has been successful in working with individuals on a group and 1-2-1 basis. Additionally, the mental health priority has shown capacity for creating whole-systems change across schools, which benefits all pupils.
- In HOA programme Year 5, the mental health priority has received additional funding to continue the delivery of the Emotional Wellbeing Key Worker Service, in 11 Hastings schools with the highest level of need. Training, support and project management will also continue, in order to embed mental health projects and training.

Attendance and Inclusion Report

Overview of Delivery

The aims of the supporting attendance priority were to significantly improve attendance rates across Hastings schools, and to reduce persistent absence. There were 9 projects in this priority across 23 schools, that utilised attendance funding for bespoke projects in Year 1 – 3. In Year 3 and 4, HOA funding supported the delivery of two specific projects in direct response to Covid-19 in the form of additional mental health support and safeguarding keyworker support. It is unclear how funding was utilised across these schools in Year 4 of the programme, due to the significant impact of Covid-19. Attendance related targets were included in other priorities, especially Inclusion, during the fourth year of the programme. In Year 1-3, all the projects and support were newly set up. These varied and bespoke projects captured the complexity and interconnected nature of attendance, and spanned to behaviour support, welfare, early intervention work, and improving accessibility to school. They worked at a targeted pupil level (e.g., key workers), whole school level (e.g., attendance charter) and at the whole community level (e.g., attendance campaigns). External organisations and in-school structures were utilised for delivery e.g., East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service, and breakfast clubs. Projects were designed to be responsive to current need and also pro-active to remove barriers to exclusion, specifically identifying and targeting those who need the most support with school engagement.

Improving inclusion was not an aim that was initially set out in the DfE Delivery Plan in 2017. It was a supporting priority area that developed organically from work on attendance. There were many intersecting activities across attendance and inclusion, such as the funding of student support managers, alternative provision, and social and inclusion managers. True to HOA's complex, whole-town, multi-strand approach, these priorities often worked in tandem with each other to improve attendance, decrease persistent absences from school and decrease exclusions. The inclusion strand shared many of the same projects as attendance, working in tandem together to provide a whole school approach to improving pupil engagement. Much like attendance, other priority areas, particularly Enrichment, supported increasing inclusion, by offering activities to increase school engagement. Projects were delivered by school staff including SLT and subject teachers (e.g., ECT) and specialist support (e.g., Sensory, Emotional and Mental Health Teaching Assistants). Many of the projects included in alternative provision such as the ECT and PRIDE Centre, worked on a short-term basis, ranging from 5 weeks to 6 weeks.

Table 13: Attendance and Inclusion Priority Outline

Priority	Aims	Targets	Number of Schools (No./%)	Number of Pupils (No.)
Attendance and Inclusion	The HOA aimed to improve attendance rates in Hastings schools, as absence rates across all funded state schools were above national averages. Working on mental health, STEM support and broadening horizons with potential employers will all support young people in their engagement with schools. (DfE, 2017).	NA	24 schools in Hastings and 1 FE college (100%) and additional schools in AG3	2,033 pupils ¹⁸

¹⁸ This is a rough estimation based on the numbers reported by the HOA delivery team reports. Some pupils may have been counted more than once in this number. Additionally, there were reports in which the number of pupils supported was not stated or not clear. Therefore, this number may not be reflective of the actual number of pupils supported.

Table 14: Attendance and Inclusion Priority Projects

Project Name	Description
East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS)	Enhanced early intervention offers
Attendance Fund	There was an array of projects across 21 schools in total. Projects were broad and varied, demonstrating the different needs of schools across Hastings e.g., school minibus, breakfast clubs, alternative provision, welfare support, attendance managers, key workers from Education Futures Trust, social and inclusion managers, student support staff, education welfare services
Attendance Fund: Education Futures Trust Keyworkers during Covid-19	Keyworkers were embedded within schools prior to and in response to Covid-19 as short-term funding. Key workers initially offered short-term support and interventions based on needs around attendance and persistent absences. This included relationship-based work with children and young people and a key mechanism of change was identified as improving relationships between parents/carers and schools.
Attendance Fund: Additional Mental Health Support Needs during Covid-19	This project was short-term and included group art therapy which focused on a sense of self, barriers to success and being part of the community. There was also one-to-one counselling support on offer, from Eggtooth for 10 weeks.
Hastings Attendance Charter	It set out shared principles and good practice for schools and community organisations, about supporting attendance and preventing persistent absences.
Hastings Attendance Campaign	The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the importance of attendance and was designed in partnership with schools, families and children and young people. There was a specific focus on disseminating information on the impact of children missing school for minor illnesses or holidays that are taken during term time.
Education Training Centre (ETC)	Another form of alternative provision for those at risk of exclusion, with the aim of re-integrating pupils back into mainstream education. Much like the PRIDE centre, the ETC utilised outside organisations to support and improve behaviour. ETC ensured to incorporate aspects of mainstream education into the ETC to keep learning going. Across 2020-2021, the ETC offer was extended to include more offers for pupils including Art Therapy and The Kitchen. There was also training for staff including behaviour management training from ESBAS.
Alternative in-school provision (including key workers)	In the fourth year of the programme, one secondary school utilised funding to provide alternative provision and ensure it was good quality, to reduce exclusions. Initiatives included were e.g., Compass Bungalow,

	Forest School and JiuJitsu. This provision deliberately targeted the most vulnerable in the school. Staff were trained to deliver some of the initiatives.
PRIDE Centre (support and pastoral welfare officer, alternative provision and personal development officer, student support managers)	The PRIDE Centre was used as an alternative to exclusion and provided space for personal development for pupils at risk of exclusion. The HOA initially funded a support and pastoral welfare officer and an alternative provision and personal development officer, which led to the PRIDE centre being created. Further funding provided student support managers for the centre. The centre has overcome significant challenges concerning pupil behaviour and their rejection of bespoke support.
Social and Inclusion Managers	School based 'social workers or social inclusion managers' to work with families/young people most at risk of persistent absence and fixed term exclusions. The two social inclusion managers/ social workers 'provided daily expert support for families encountering adversity', to secure a complementary service to teachers and pastoral staff currently in school.
Additional Mental Health Support Projects	These projects were funded short-term during Covid-19 and were targeted across Year 8 pupils. Initiatives included Eggtooth one to one counselling support, behaviour support and support from 'Believe in you Teens' for small group support.
Twinning	The HOA provided additional funding to drive the inclusion strand across AG3. This funding included having a co-ordinator liaise with other partnership members and schools, as well as delivering in school projects. Much like other strands across the HOA, the twinning strand has continued into Year 5 of the programme, and as of March 2022, there were 8 schools taking part in inclusion activities.

Progress and Perceived Progress

Progress Towards Attendance Targets (Year 1-3):

By July 2020, the HOA programme aimed to have an attendance rate across primary schools that was in line with national average

Attendance increased from 94.8% in 2016-17, to 95.4% in 2018-19. This was still below the regional (95.7%) and national (96%) in 2018-19. However, progress was clearly on track.

By end July 2020, the HOA programme aimed for persistent absence rates in Hastings primary schools to be in line with national average

Persistent absence rates decreased from 13.8% in 2016-17 to 10.7% in 2018-19. This was still higher than the regional (9.1%) and national (8.2%) in the same year. However, this shows good reduction in absence rates for Hastings prior to Covid-19.

By July 2020, the HOA programme aimed for Hastings secondary schools to have an attendance rate that was line with national average

Attendance in secondary schools increased from 93.47% in 2016-17 to 93.86% in 2018-19. This was slightly lower than the regional (94%) and national (94.5%) averages. There is not much change in secondary school attendance, and this is a general issue across Hastings, in which secondary school improvements were slower than in primary schools.

By July 2020, the HOA programme aimed for all Hastings secondary schools to have a persistent absence rate that was in line with national average

Persistent absence rates decreased from 17.27% in 2016-17 to 15% in 2018-19. This was lower than the regional (13.9%) and national (13.7%) in the same year.

Progress Towards Current Inclusion Targets:

Hastings secondary schools aimed to have 50% reduction in the number of permanent exclusions (PEX) by March 2021, with 0 permanent exclusions by September 2021 and;

Hastings secondary schools aimed to have 50% reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions (FTE)

Inclusion showed promising progress during 2020-2021, at the height of Covid-19 lockdowns, however it is difficult to know the full extent of the progress made across the whole programme.

Across the secondary schools in Hastings where this was being implemented, there was a mixture of successes in progress due to Covid-19 closures and difficulty in accessing provision. One school identified that FTEs were reduced by 71% compared to the same time last year. PEX were reduced by 33%. Pupils who were the most disadvantaged decreased their FTE rate by 34% by May 2021. Yet, in another school, FTEs were higher than the intended KPIs for pupils engaging in their HOA funded provision.

The HOA programmed aimed to achieve zero permanent exclusions in AG3schools from January 2021

There were 18 permanent exclusions across AG3 in total, but we recognise that pupils were in school for 12 weeks longer across this academic year, and therefore there was more time to exclude challenging pupils. Across AG3 engaging schools, 3/8 schools have had 0 permanent exclusions in 2020-2021. Eight have had 1+ permanent exclusions. This did not meet the targets for most schools in AG3.

The HOA programme aimed to significantly reduce fixed period exclusions in AG3 schools

There was a reduction in fixed period exclusions across AG3 schools for the general pupil populace. However, for pupils who were on FSM, and therefore the most disadvantaged pupils, there was a slight increase in fixed term exclusions. There was no reduction in fixed term exclusions for SEND pupils. It is possible this is due to an increased number of pupils being classed as FSM following lockdowns. However, this has slowed the progress of the impact of HOA inclusion activities in AG3.

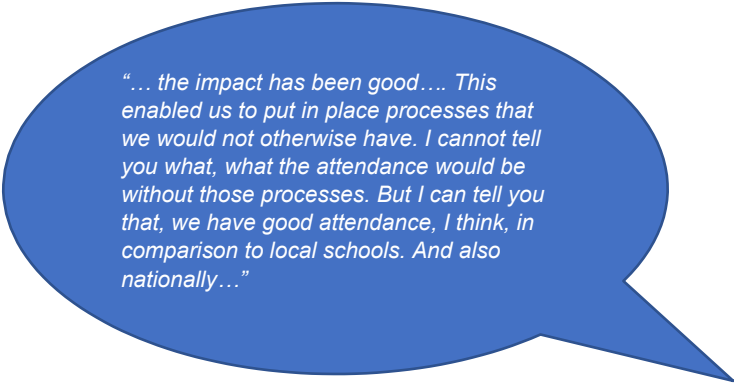
Perceived Early Outcomes of Attendance and Inclusion Work:

Emerging data suggested that attendance and inclusion are improving across secondary and primary schools.

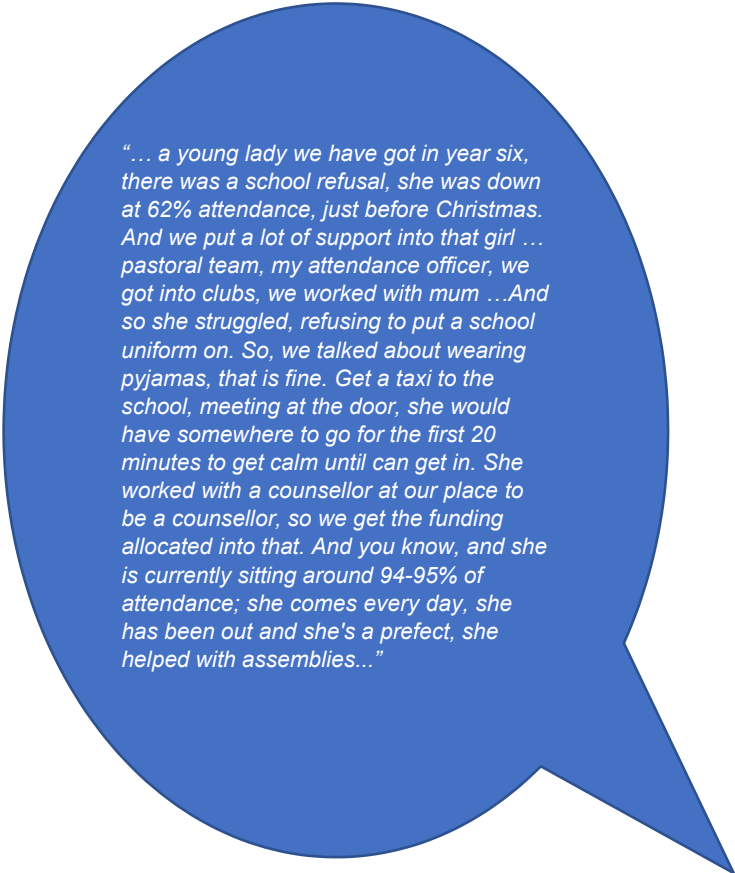
Other priorities contributed to improved attendance. There is evidence that attendance has increased as of May 2021. Another secondary school indicated that attendance increased to 72% from 66%. Good levels of re-integration back into mainstream education was also observed with 73% of pupils re-integrating. Other inclusion provision was successful, evidencing an 11% improvement in SEND attendance across multiple terms.

While Covid-19 created a challenging context to focus on attendance, the HOA utilised support for identified vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils across all priorities and continued to work on engaging and supporting families to maintain relationships. Despite the challenges of meeting all their targets, there is evidence that HOA has continued to make progress with attendance. For instance, one secondary school that used HOA funding prior to Covid-19, to create alternative provision to keep pupils with challenging behaviour involved in the school, identified that among its SEND pupils' attendance increased by 11%. For Pupil Premium pupils, it was a 9% increase.

The HOA worked with three secondary schools and one organisation in their inclusion work during the first three years of the programme. As seen in the HOA 2021 report, significant progress was made towards reducing exclusions



"... the impact has been good.... This enabled us to put in place processes that we would not otherwise have. I cannot tell you what, what the attendance would be without those processes. But I can tell you that, we have good attendance, I think, in comparison to local schools. And also nationally..."



"... a young lady we have got in year six, there was a school refusal, she was down at 62% attendance, just before Christmas. And we put a lot of support into that girl ... pastoral team, my attendance officer, we got into clubs, we worked with mum ... And so she struggled, refusing to put a school uniform on. So, we talked about wearing pyjamas, that is fine. Get a taxi to the school, meeting at the door, she would have somewhere to go for the first 20 minutes to get calm until can get in. She worked with a counsellor at our place to be a counsellor, so we get the funding allocated into that. And you know, and she is currently sitting around 94-95% of attendance; she comes every day, she has been out and she's a prefect, she helped with assemblies..."

across Hastings schools. The Inclusion priority identified those in need of the most support, including pupils with SEND those, receiving pupil premium, and those who indicated specifically challenging behaviour. They continued to identify and work with these groups during Covid-19. Much like other strands, some progress was stalled due to Covid-19. Despite disruption, continued progress demonstrated schools are invested in implementing resources and alternatives to exclusion. Progress made during Covid-19 is promising in terms of the future of the HOA programme. It is difficult to measure exclusions across the whole of Hastings. However, in individual schools engaging across Hastings, although some of their inclusion targets have not been reached, we note slow, but positive change.

Conclusion

- More time is needed to understand the full extent of the impact of HOA projects on attendance, but preliminary data demonstrates that attendance has been supported throughout Covid-19. There is strong evidence from early programme years that projects improved attendance, and while it has been difficult to meet targets during programme year 4, there has been positive change.
- Inclusion and attendance are underpinning priorities in Year 5 of the HOA programme. Through the continued embedding of maths, literacy, mental health, and broadening horizons, it is highly likely there will be a positive impact on attendance, exclusions, and pupil absence in Hastings.