

Premier League Inspires Evaluation Report

Evaluating the impact of the Premier League Inspires programme on participants' attendance and behaviour in education





“Our pupils fully engage when Premier League Inspires are in. We find an improvement in behaviour and attendance. The pupils’ confidence grows... they learn new coping strategies and there is a general improvement all round.”

School Lead A

Foreword

Premier League Inspires is making a considerable difference to young people across England and Wales.

Sheffield Hallam University’s independent evaluation of the Premier League Inspires programme highlights its positive impact on participants and schools, particularly in raising aspirations, strengthening relationships between schools and pupils, and expanding future opportunities.

Our research has found that almost 80% of schools felt that Premier League Inspires helped to reduce pupil absenteeism, with 86% saying that the programme also reduced pupils’ risk of exclusion.

Furthermore, 92% of schools believe that Premier League Inspires helps to improve pupils’ behaviour, while 96% state that the programme increases pupils’ engagement in lessons.

Young people we spoke to reported that the Premier League Inspires programme helped them to see a greater value to being in school, and develop a more positive outlook towards school, education, and life.

By using football as the hook to build relationships between teachers and pupils, Premier League Inspires supports schools to address key issues, helping to ensure that every child feels connected, empowered, and inspired in school.

Dr Steve Bullough,
Senior Research Fellow, Sport Industry Research Group,
Sheffield Hallam University

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**
Knowledge Applied

What is Premier League Inspires?

Launched in 2019, Premier League Inspires creates life-changing opportunities for young people who may be at risk of not reaching their potential, helping them to develop the personal skills and positive attitudes needed to succeed in life.

The secondary school targeted intervention programme, which is funded by the Premier League and Professional Footballers' Association, uses the power of football to prepare young people for further education and employment through a series of face-to-face mentoring sessions, workshops and social-action projects.

Now in its sixth year of delivery, Premier League Inspires has engaged more than 40,000 young people aged 11-to-18, supporting them to reach their potential in more than 1,000 education establishments across England and Wales.

Anecdotal evidence showed that the programme, which is delivered by professional football club charities across England and Wales, was having a positive impact on pupils' overall school attendance and behaviour in class.

Sheffield Hallam University was commissioned by the Premier League Charitable Fund, the charitable arm of the Premier League, in 2024. It sought to evidence the impact of the programme on pupils' attendance and behaviour in school, and understand the extent of those impacts across different groups.

This independent evaluation clearly shows the impact of the Premier League Inspires programme on pupils' attendance and behaviour in school.



Positioning Premier League Inspires in government landscape

Context of the evaluation

It is well documented that attendance and behaviour has a huge impact on children's future chances in life.

Persistent school absence is one of the most significant ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Data from the Department for Education** shows that almost one in every five children in England are persistently absent from school, doubling since the pandemic.



Why attendance matters

A 2025 Department for Education report, **'The link between attendance and attainment in an assessment year'** quantified the importance of attendance in school and the impact on future life. Key findings revealed that missing 10 days of Year 11 reduced the likelihood of achieving grade 5 in English and maths by around 50%.

The Department for Education states that the highest attendance rates are linked with the best outcomes at all key stages. Even missing small amounts of education can mean a child misses important parts of the curriculum and may therefore struggle to learn concepts that build on what they missed.

As well as missing out on academic learning, absent pupils also miss out on other whole school experiences that contribute to wellbeing, such as learning with peers, enjoying sport and music, building relationships with adults beyond their families and building friendships.

Behaviour

The Department for Education **latest behaviour survey** records a "statistically significant" decrease in the proportion of teachers reporting their school was calm and orderly "every day" or "most days" in the week before the survey was conducted, from 59 per cent in May 2023 to 53 per cent last year.

The new data shared in August 2025 also revealed seven out of every 30 classroom minutes are lost to poor behaviour, highlighting the importance of initiatives such as Premier League Inspires continuing to engage young people in education settings.

Poor attendance and negative behaviour can, in turn, lead to poor academic attainment, exclusions and suspensions which can negatively impact on outcomes for young people.

Premier League Inspires helps improve pupils' behaviour and attendance in school

In 2024, the Premier League Charitable Fund commissioned Sheffield Hallam University to evaluate the impact of the Premier League Inspires programme on young peoples' attendance and behaviour in education.

With the knowledge that increased attendance can also boost social skills which help young people to achieve and thrive, this evaluation also explored the wider impacts of the programme, including the impact on relationship building and parental engagement, all of which help young people to feel a sense of belonging in their school community.

"Missing 10 days of Year 11 reduced the likelihood of achieving grade 5 in English and Maths by around 50%."

Department for Education research 2025

Sheffield Hallam University key findings

Sheffield Hallam University research found that Premier League Inspires offers specialised, sustained and personalised support. The programme brings fresh perspectives and provides unique opportunities to pupils in schools facing limited resource and capacity.

The overwhelming majority of participating schools (92%) reported that Premier League Inspires helped to improve participants’ behaviour, reporting an average increase of 22% in positive behaviour points (average of 37.4 to 45.8) from half term one (H/T1) to half term six (H/T6).



“It is the only programme that has actually made a difference.”

School Lead B

Impact of Premier League Inspires



92%

of schools said that Premier League Inspires is helping to **improve participants' behaviour**



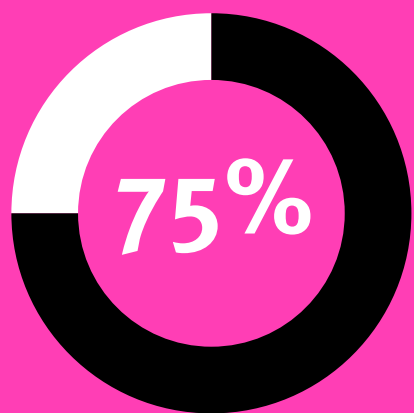
100%

of schools said that Premier League Inspires had a positive impact on pupils' **perceived opportunities, future aspirations and education**



92%

of schools said that Premier League Inspires provides a service they are unable to deliver themselves



of schools state that Premier League Inspires is **better than other programmes they have tried to address attendance and behaviour**



79%

of schools reported that Premier League Inspires is **helping to reduce absenteeism**



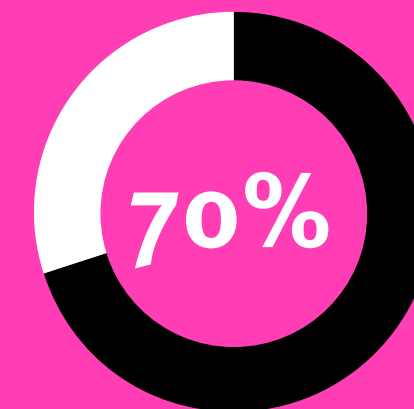
96%

of schools said that Premier League Inspires is **helping to improve participants' engagement in class**




86%

of schools said that Premier League Inspires is **helping to reduce participants' risk of exclusion from school**




of schools felt that the **Premier League brand added value to the programme**

Key findings: Improved behaviour

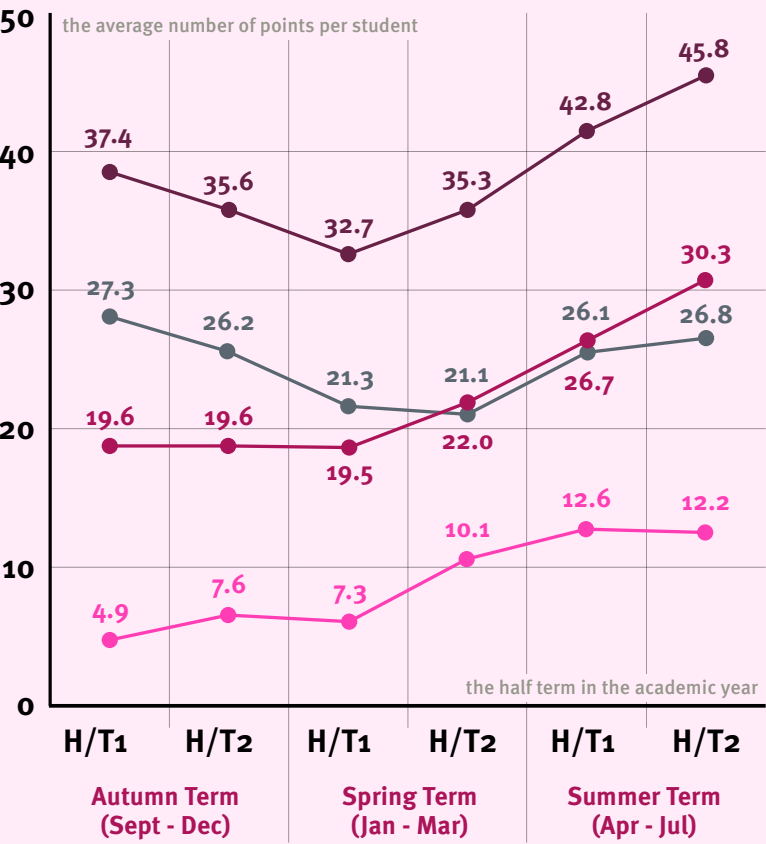


School staff reported multiple examples of the programme having a positive influence on pupils' behaviour.



School staff reported that pupils learned appropriate behaviours, becoming more resilient and less conflictive, with some pupils showing greater engagement with school.

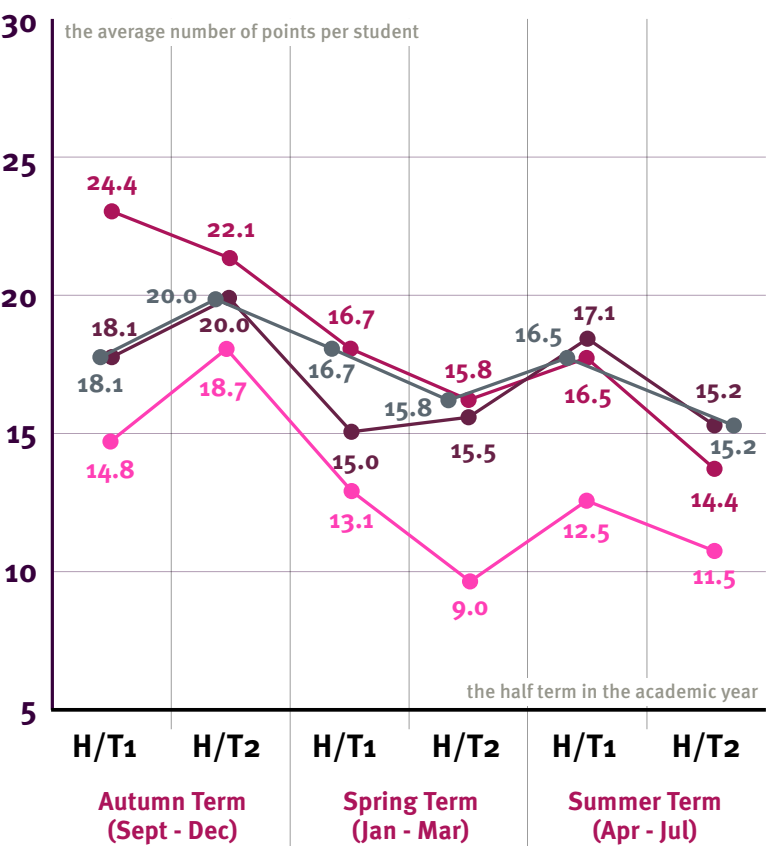
Positive behaviour points



Premier League Inspires participants show a **marked increase in positive behaviour points** from the second part of the academic year, which continues to increase throughout the year.

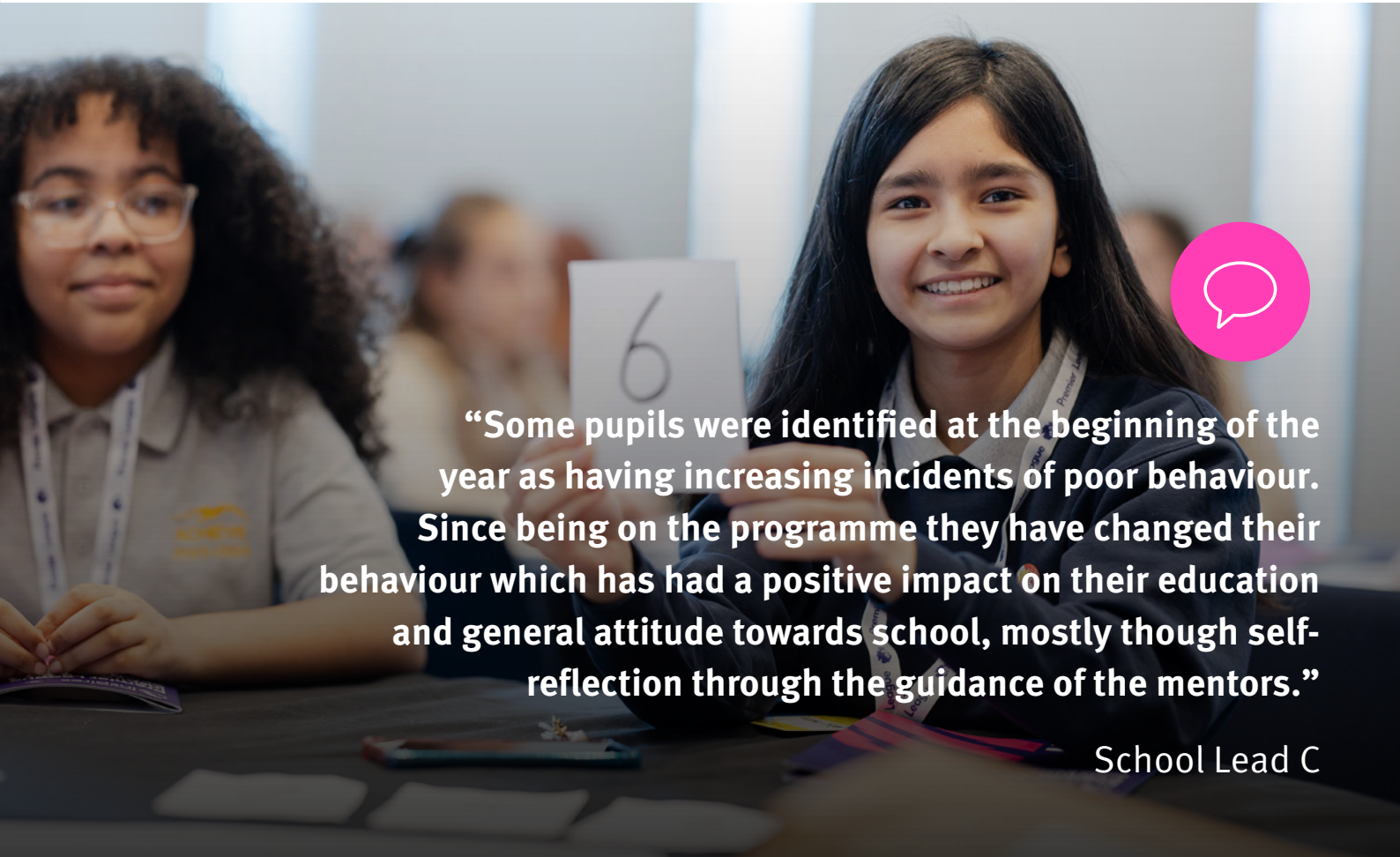
- All participants
- Attendance under national average (91%)
- Attendance under 80%
- Attendance under 50%

Negative behaviour points



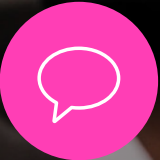
Premier League Inspires participants show a **marked decrease in negative behaviour points** throughout the year.

- All participants
- Attendance under national average (91%)
- Attendance under 80%
- Attendance under 50%



“Some pupils were identified at the beginning of the year as having increasing incidents of poor behaviour. Since being on the programme they have changed their behaviour which has had a positive impact on their education and general attitude towards school, mostly though self-reflection through the guidance of the mentors.”

School Lead C



“Pupils’ attendance to school on the days of the project was very high. They develop a sense of belonging to the group through this experience which helps their social skills.”

School Lead D

Key findings: Improved attendance



School staff reported that some pupils who skipped school or were frequently absent began attending regularly on the days that Premier League Inspires was delivered.

Encouraging school attendance is a major focus for Premier League Inspires. Some schools reported significant improvements in attendance. These improvements are often linked to pupils’ increased confidence, self-esteem, and engagement in school activities.

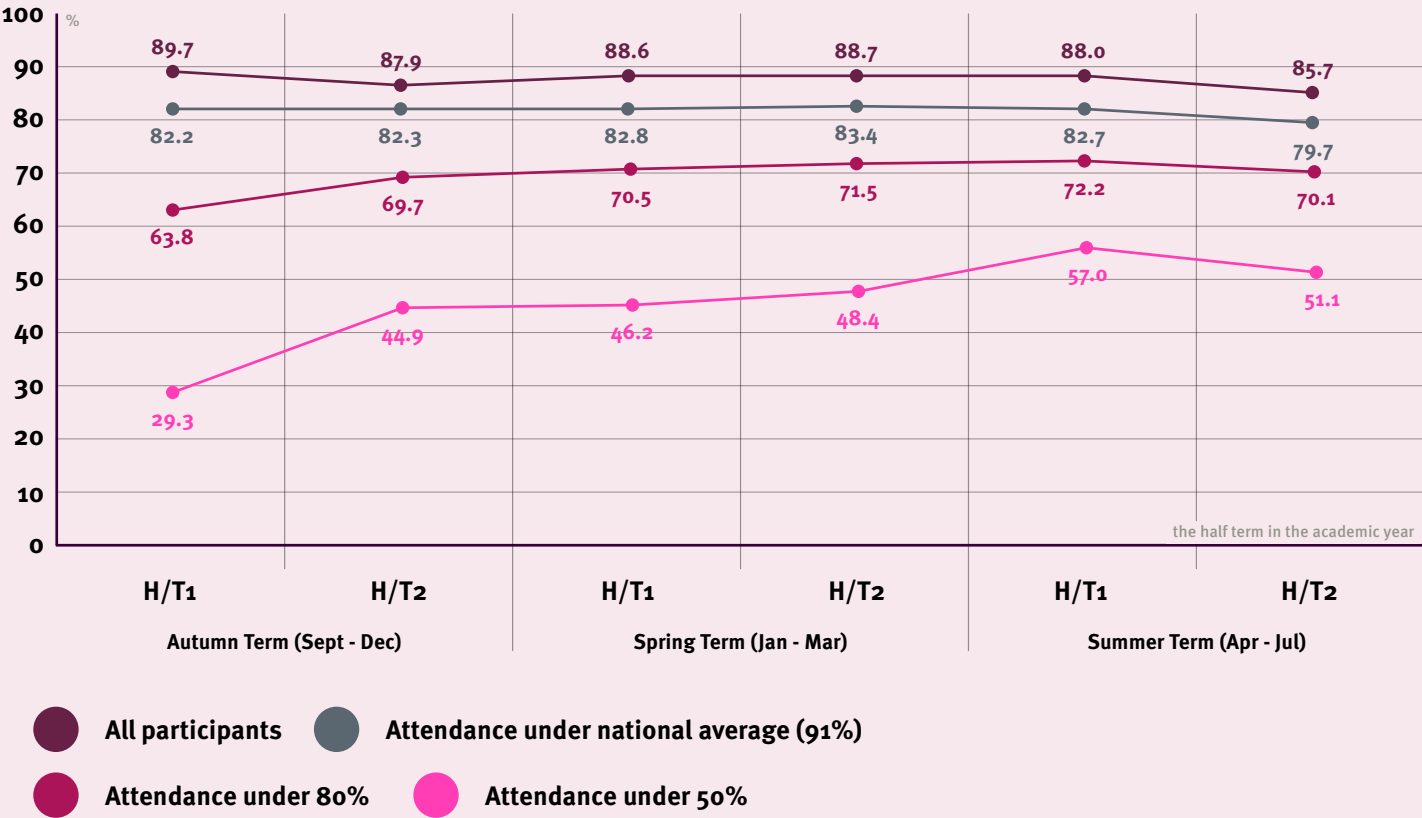
The programme creates an environment that encourages pupils to attend school more regularly and behave better, supported by positive relationships, personalised mentoring, and engaging activities.



Several pupils actively encouraged the next cohort to join the programme.

Many young people attend school more as a result of being part of this programme. School staff discussed that they have seen positive changes over time, with a significant reduction in suspensions and improvements in attendance for many.

Attendance academic year 2023-24 (all six terms of data supplied)



National attendance rates traditionally decrease during the last week of the summer term with a significant portion of these absences being unauthorised holidays taken before the official end of term. While Premier League Inspires data follows this trend, it also shows that for the young people with significantly low attendance (under 50%), their attendance improves through the year and overall.

Impact of Premier League Inspires on exclusion

- There was a slight downward trend in the rate of suspensions from the participants.
- The depth and duration of the Premier League Inspires programme supports pupils to reduce risk of exclusion.
- In many cases, the Premier League Inspires programme serves as an early intervention tool, helping to address behaviours before they escalate to the point of exclusion.



Key findings: Personal development

School leads reported that Premier League Inspires significantly boosted the confidence of participants and increased self-esteem and engagement among pupils.



Pupils also demonstrated positive personal development, and perceived improvements in managing their emotions/regulation.



Increased engagement in school emerged as pupils look forward to the programme as a break from formal lessons, which motivates them to attend schools and to behave better.

Pupils participating in Premier League Inspires exhibited improved attitudes toward school, emotional maturity, and stronger social connections.

“I think my attitude towards people (in school) has changed. I used to be quite mouthy, but [the Foundation staff] have taught me to think before I speak and to be more humble.” **Year 9 pupil**

“Before I was messing around in class, and not attending lessons, spending a lot of time in ‘reset’ and (getting) a detention every day. (Since joining Premier League Inspires) I have not had any ‘resets’ or suspensions this year. I’ve learned not to mess around, not to talk at the wrong time and hold it to break/lunch. I feel happier at school now.”

Year 9 pupil



Premier League Inspires has fostered inclusivity, promoted community involvement, and contributed to an improved school environment.



Key findings: Improved relationships

Teachers reported better connections with some pupils, improved behaviour in classrooms, and greater ease in managing some pupils where behaviour management had been a challenge.

Collaboration with mentors has provided teachers with new tools to engage challenging pupils effectively. Pupils developed meaningful connections with mentors and staff.



One-to-one mentoring is the delivery mechanism that has the most impact.

Mentoring relationships often extended beyond the initial programme, providing continued support.



School leads reported observed positive changes in pupils, with teachers commending Premier League Inspires for providing pupils with a sense of purpose and an opportunity to shine in ways they had not before.

Building relationships and trust through the mentor role is vital. Pupils respond positively to external mentors and the association with football clubs, which can inspire greater participation in school and extracurricular activities.

“Target setting and 1:1 tailor-made support enables pupils the bespoke intervention they need. Targets help to improve behaviour and attitude and attendance as they have a positive mentor having dedicated 1:1 support each week for a long set period building trusting supportive relationships.”

School Lead E

“Premier League Inspires has allowed our pupils to feel part of the community, they have had opportunities that they may not normally get. It has helped our pupils to respect the community they live in and take pride to be part of their community.”

School lead F

Key findings – Programme delivery

“My behaviour has got better in class, (I’ve) got a better mindset. Before I was always thinking about how to be ‘bad’ to escape being in lessons, but now I would rather go to lessons and not get any detentions or into any trouble, but before I always was. I am better because Premier League (Inspires) has helped me out. Now, I just want to be a better person in general.”

Year 8 pupil



Schools reported that Premier League Inspires staff bring **specialised expertise and a fresh perspective.**

‘We do not have the skills or time to deliver such a great course, we are very lucky to have it.’

School Lead G



Over **90% of schools** reported that Premier League Inspires provides a service to their school that they are unable to deliver themselves.

More than 35,000 Premier League Inspires sessions took place in 2024/25

‘It is timing, planning and then delivery. With Premier League Inspires coming in it has given the staff valuable time to build on relationships in a positive way. Premier League Inspires staff have supported our staff in building these relationships and our staff have been able to continue to deliver on various topics.’

School Lead H



In addition to capacity and expertise, the programme **offers pupils experiences and mentorship that the school cannot.**

‘Significantly better than other providers. More structured, links in with school and supportive. Target based, outcomes achieved, feedback given.’

School Lead I



Use of **football as a tool** is, for many, the **‘hook’** that engages them and keeps them in the programme. This sets Premier League Inspires apart from other programmes of a similar nature.

Key findings: Parental engagement

“We have had feedback from parents this year about how much their children have enjoyed the programme. They go home to talk to their parents about the programme and what they have done in their sessions.”

School Lead J



Pupils frequently discuss Premier League Inspires sessions at home, strengthening family engagement in education.

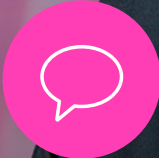


Many pupils continued their participation in community programmes after finishing school-based sessions, and there are examples of some joining other external programmes.

“Parents have been more engaged and feel that school are supporting with more opportunities to engage some of our more difficult to reach pupils.”

School Lead K

35% of schools mentioned improved parental engagement thanks to Premier League Inspires.



“Parents have reported increased engagement and interest in their children’s education, noting improvements in behaviour and attitudes at home as a result of the positive reinforcement and mentoring provided.”

School Lead L



Methodology

The Sheffield Hallam University Sport Industry Research Group is a team of full-time researchers who apply principles of economics, management science, and social science to solve real world problems and deliver positive social impacts. Established in 1996, the team provide policy-relevant research that delivers actionable insights. Staff from the Sheffield Institute of Education at Sheffield Hallam University supported the research.

The method for this research included:

- Secondary analysis of data returns from over 1,000 participants from the 2023/24 academic year, and the autumn term of the 2024/25 academic year, for attendance, behaviour, and suspensions.
- Survey responses from 45 football club charities delivering the Premier League Inspires programme.
- Survey responses from 51 school leads delivering Premier League Inspires.
- Interviews with 14 Premier League Inspires coordinators from football club charities.
- Interviews with 38 participants, and 14 teaching staff/senior leaders from visits to five schools where the Premier League Inspires programme is being delivered.



“Bringing in an outside agency to work with pupils allows us to show pupils that we are willing to invest in them beyond the normal scope of school life. The [professional football club charity] staff have a level of expertise in working to engage pupils in practical sport-based activities that often staff in school (other than PE staff) don’t have and we appreciate being able to offer these opportunities for our pupils.”

School Lead M



Football club charities delivering Premier League Inspires (2024-25 academic year)

- AFC Bournemouth Community Sports Trust
- Argyle Community Trust (Plymouth)
- Arsenal in the Community
- Aston Villa Foundation
- Blackburn Rovers Community Trust
- Blackpool FC Community Trust
- Bolton Wanderers in the Community
- Brentford FC Community Sports Trust
- Brighton & Hove Albion Foundation
- Burnley FC in the Community
- Cardiff City FC Community Foundation
- Charlton Athletic Community Trust
- Chelsea FC Foundation
- City in the Community (Manchester City)
- Club Doncaster Foundation
- Derby County Community Trust
- Everton in the Community
- Foundation of Light (Sunderland)
- Fulham FC Foundation
- Huddersfield Town Foundation
- Leeds United Foundation
- Leicester City in the Community
- Leyton Orient Trust
- LFC Foundation (Liverpool)
- Manchester United Foundation
- Middlesbrough FC Foundation
- Newcastle United Foundation
- Norwich City Community Sports Foundation
- Nottingham Forest Community Trust
- Palace for Life Foundation (Crystal Palace)
- Pompey in the Community (Portsmouth)
- QPR in the Community Trust
- Reading FC Community Trust
- Saints Foundation (Southampton)
- Sheffield United Community Foundation
- Sky Blues in the Community (Coventry)
- Stoke City Community Trust
- Swansea City AFC Foundation
- The Albion Foundation (West Bromwich Albion)
- Tigers Trust (Hull City)
- Tottenham Hotspur Foundation
- Watford FC Community Sports and Education Trust
- West Ham United Foundation
- Wigan Athletic Community Trust
- Wolves Foundation

To discover the most recent list of professional football club charities delivering Premier League Inspires, please visit: www.premierleague.com/plcf/premier-league-inspires

Evaluating the impact of the Premier League Inspires programme on participants' attendance and behaviour in education was commissioned by the Premier League Charitable Fund in 2024.

For further information, please email mailbox@plcf.co.uk
or visit www.premierleague.com/plcf

The Premier League Charitable Fund is a registered charity no: 1137208