



Education and schools

A successful economy in the global market place requires a well educated and highly skilled workforce. Children need to be given a good start in education, as a foundation for future learning; young people must be equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for life and work; adults must be encouraged and enabled to work, to improve their skills and enrich their lives.

We have extensive experience of research in education. Our work spans the very youngest learners to the very oldest, and we work across a range of methodologies, from large scale national surveys, to small scale qualitative and evaluative research techniques, including focus group moderation, in-depth interviews and desk-based policy evaluation. We have conducted research with primary and secondary school pupils, parents, teachers, students, the unemployed, basic skills learners, and employees.

Recent examples of projects include:

Evaluation of the School Sport Partnership Programme

TNS has been commissioned since 2003 to conduct the annual school sports survey with primary, secondary and special schools in England. The survey collects detailed quantitative information about the provision and take-up of PE and schools sport activity across schools involved in SSCo Partnerships. This survey involves a mixed-method approach, with schools offered a choice of a self-completion paper questionnaire or a self-completion online questionnaire. In the survey for the academic year 2006/07, we achieved a response rate of 99% with over 22,000 schools participating in the survey. The results of the survey are used to measure against a PSA target. The findings of the survey can be accessed via the survey website: www.tnsinfo.com/sportsurvey.

Evaluation of the Science Learning Centres

TNS is currently in a consortium which has been engaged by the DCSF and the Wellcome Trust to conduct an evaluation of the Science Learning Centres. This is a two-year, multi-strand evaluation which includes a quantitative survey of science educators, a quantitative survey among those who have attended a Science Learning Centre, qualitative research among Centres and stakeholders, and observational research in schools.



Evaluation of National Centre for Excellence in the teaching of Maths

We are currently involved in a consortium which is evaluating the National Centre for Excellence in the teaching of Maths. The National Centre uses a web portal to communicate with teachers who teach maths. TNS conducted an online survey amongst all registered users to identify how the portal was used and what users' felt about the content. The findings from this survey were fed into the overall evaluation.

Defining the size of TDA Target Audience Groups

In 2007 we conducted research on behalf of TDA to define the size of the potential target groups for teacher recruitment. Three different targets were examined, representing new graduates, career finders and career switchers. In total more than 30,000 members of the public were screened to find these target groups using the TNS omnibus.

Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT)

For the past three years we have evaluated the Lead Practitioner programme for SSAT. This is a programme of training and support for teachers, to assist with the introduction and practice of vocational education in secondary schools. This research has used a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews, paired depths and focus groups. This year's program has involved talking to over fifty teachers across a range of different institutions. We look at the perceived benefits to teachers of their involvement in the Lead Practitioner programme, as well as benefits on schools and barriers to taking part. We have also evaluated support materials and websites.

School Food Trust Headteachers' Panel

In 2007 we completed the first wave of recruitment and a survey of headteachers for the School Food Trust, to monitor implementation of the new school food standards. We conducted interviews with headteachers of 206 primary and 74 secondary schools, with a response rate of 53% among primary schools and 26% among secondary schools.

A study of Schools Meals in Primary Schools in England

This study was conducted on behalf of the (then) DfES and Food Standards Agency. We completed this project, carried out with Kings College London, to assess whether food provided in primary schools meets the statutory Nutritional Standards set out in the regulations and associated good practice guidance, and whether it meets the Expert Working Group's Nutritional Guidelines for School Meals. The study identified the food consumption and nutrient intakes of primary school children from school meals. Fieldwork was carried out in 150 schools, for five days per school, and over 7000 pupils were interviewed, their meals recorded, and leftover foods weighed. A full inventory was made of foods available each day, and standard portions were weighed.

Survey of Information and Communications Technology in schools

This survey, carried out on behalf of (then) DfES, measured the level and type of use of ICT in schools in England. Interviews were completed with a representative sample of around 2,500 primary, secondary and special schools. Schools had the option of completing a postal questionnaire or an online version and our survey assistants chased responses. The data collected offer an overview of current ICT provision and practice in schools, which is used widely within the DCSF when developing new policies that will shape future plans for ICT in schools, and to chart emerging trends and progress towards the Prime Minister's computer to pupil ratio targets.

An evaluation of education related Parenting Contracts

On behalf of DCSF TNS completed an evaluation of education related Parenting Contracts. The study started with a census of LAs, followed by a survey among schools known to be using Parenting Contracts. The final stage of the project involved detailed case studies among schools, parents and children.

Research on pupils' views of school meals

This study was commissioned by the Scottish Executive in support of the work of the Expert Panel on School Meals. It involved group discussions with pupils in secondary schools, paired depth interviews with pupils in primary schools and participant observation of school canteens throughout Scotland.

This research was designed to sit alongside the consultation exercise seeking views on the interim report of the Expert Panel on School Meals and can be viewed on the Scottish Executive website.

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