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“100% of teachers felt the program benefited the students’ well being .”

Rackets Cubed provides integrated sports, education, and nutrition after-school programmes in ‘aspirational settings’, with the aims of:

- Raising academic achievement
- Improving health, fitness, and sporting ability
- Improving self-confidence, self-discipline, and resilience

Rackets Cubed and the University of Roehampton have been working in collaboration to evaluate the impact of the programme at four South West London primary schools: Alton, Heathmere, Sacred Heart, and St Andrew’s. All four have IDACI scores ranging between 50 – 70.5 %, indicating high levels of socio- economic deprivation. 110 children participated in the programme during the term beginning October 2018.

The University of Roehampton carried out a mixed methodology qualitative impact assessment, gathering data from the children, their parents, their teachers, and the Rackets Cubed coaches. We have observed impacts on the children’s:

- Concentration and skills
- Academic and sports engagement
- Wellbeing and resilience

The evaluation has also revealed wide ranging benefits for coaching staff, teachers, and on the host institutions.

This document is a summary capturing the highlights of the full impact evaluation carried out by the University of Roehampton. The evaluation report is available upon request from Rackets Cubed.

WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE

The programme has improved the children’s sense of wellbeing and their resilience.

- 62% of parents surveyed noticed improvements in their child’s energy levels, happiness, and/or confidence.
- Parents commented that ‘He has opened up more and looks forward to every [session]. He seems to enjoy it very much and he appears a lot more energised and happier. As a family we feel that not only he has benefitted from the program, but we have all. His happiness is our happiness’ while another observes that ‘[She has] tons more energy and has grown in confidence’
- All of the ten teachers interviewed felt the programme had positive benefits for the children’s wellbeing and enjoyment.
- Two commented specifically that their Rackets Cubed classes were more resilient as a whole: Jo from Heathmere noted that ‘some children just give up very easily in class but when in Rackets Cubed they tend not to give up so easily’.

CONCENTRATION AND SKILLS

The programme enhanced the children's concentration levels and their physical, social, and listening skills.

- 54% of parents surveyed reported improvements in their child's concentration levels, listening and/or social skills.
- One parent observed that '[She has] more social skills/communication with others [and] she's getting better with listening' while another thought that her son's 'concentration levels and listening skills have increased'.
- All of the teachers interviewed noticed an increase in the children's concentration and information retention.
- Two of the teachers interviewed also reported increases in the children's skills: Shirley from Alton School notes that 'We can see the children improving with gross and fine motor skills, they understand discipline because they see with tennis that there is a time to talk and a time to listen, they learn to be accountable for themselves and others'. Jade, also from Alton, reports that 'We keep seeing the skills that they learn with Rackets Cubed coming through in other lessons as well'.
- All 10 coaches reported that the children made significant progress in hand-eye co-ordination, ball-handling skills, and discipline on the court.

ACADEMIC AND SPORTING ENGAGEMENT

The programme also increased the children's enjoyment of maths and racquet sports, and enhanced their general academic engagement.

- 17% of children felt more strongly at the programme's end that they 'liked learning new things', and 26% felt more strongly that 'maths can be fun'.
- The children reported enjoying sports on average 36% more at the end of the programme. There was also a 31% average increase in the cohort's confidence in the rules of tennis, squash, or table tennis, demonstrating the children's growing confidence in their own knowledge and skillsets.
- 38% of parents surveyed reported that their child had improved their skills and effort in maths. One has noticed that '[His] mood, co-ordination, and maths ability has improved a great deal', while another parent comments that '[He] is getting better with listening and trying harder with maths', and a third sees that her daughter 'is doing really well in maths'.
- Two of the teachers interviewed identified positive changes in the children's attitudes towards learning. For example, Jo from Heathmere reported that 'one of my colleagues took my class one day and he said to me that he felt that the children were willing to try and take risks, that there was a nice atmosphere in my class and I think that part of this change is due to Rackets Cubed because I know that this wasn't the case at the beginning'.

RAISING ASPIRATIONS AND CREATING OPPORTUNITY

Interviews with coaches and the host sites demonstrates the potential of the programme not only in terms of access to new experiences for the children, but in changing perceptions at host organisations:

- 'You can tell [the children] have a real sense of freedom when they come here. The tennis court is a big space, a lot of these children don't live in a big space, even schools are small, but when I watch them run around here, I can really get a sense of freedom from them' (Dani, Director of Racquet Sports, Roehampton Club)
- Dani also notes that 'Rackets Cubed has opened our eyes as a club to what is possible. It has opened our eyes to the children's potential, talent doesn't discriminate'
- 'I wanted to get involved as soon as I heard about it purely because it really struck a chord with me, I grew up in a not so affluent reality, I know how restrictive it was to play tennis as a youth' (Metro, Tennis Coach)

In addition, the programme is also creating employment and professional development opportunities for the rackets sports coaches and teachers. All of the ten coaches interviewed noted that working for Rackets Cubed had a positive impact on their professional development and profile:

- 'Rackets Cubed has given me confidence in being a coach [...] and it has given a boost to my image because everyone knows about them in squash' (Bruna, Squash Coach)
- 'Rackets Cubed helped me to understand that I would like to carry on working with children especially with children that come from disadvantaged backgrounds' (Robbie, Squash Coach)
- Jade, a teacher at Alton School, noted that she was now integrating approaches and games from Rackets Cubed maths sessions into all of her teaching plans.

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