National Foundation for Educational Research

The effects of the school environment on young people's attitudes towards education and learning

Summary Report

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1.   Introduction

1.1 Background

Partnerships for Schools (PfS) is responsible for delivering the government's secondary school renewal programme, Building Schools for the Future (BSF). PfS is working with local authorities and the private sector to rebuild or renew every one of England's 3,500 state secondary schools during the 15-year lifetime of the multi-billion BSF programme. PfS's education and design specialists work with local authorities to develop education visions to create innovative and exciting learning environments for schools.

The first new build school, delivered by a Local Education Partnership, opened in Bristol in September 2007. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was been commissioned by PfS to assess the impact of the school environment on young people's attitudes towards their education and learning. The research comprised 'before' and 'after' surveys administered to students in year groups 7 and 8 in this first BSF school. Students were surveyed about their thoughts on their school environment, the learning opportunities available to them and their views on their new school.

1.2 Aims of the research

The key research objective of the study was:

> *To demonstrate the difference that BSF schools are making to young people's attitudes towards education and learning, as measured by their levels of engagement and enthusiasm for school.*

This key research objective was further broken down into a number of research questions. These included the following:

- Has the new school environment contributed to students' levels of motivation and engagement?
- Do students think that the new buildings/facilities have created better learning opportunities?
- Has the move from old to new buildings affected students' study skills or their learning behaviours?
- Have students' attitudes to school changed in any notable ways?
- Have students' feelings of self-worth, self-esteem and self-efficacy been affected by the new environment?

- How have the new buildings changed students' ways of learning? How has the use of ICT changed?

- How has the new environment affected teaching and learning? Are there any differences in the ways that teachers teach?

- Do students feel that the new buildings will have any impact on their learning outcomes?

1.3 Methodology

The evaluation consisted of 'before' and 'after' surveys to two year groups of students in the first BSF school. The 'before' survey was administered to Year 7 and 8 students prior to the opening of the new building at the end of the summer term 2007. The 'after' survey was administered to the same year cohorts (now Years 8 and 9), towards the end of the autumn term, hence there was a period of five months between the two surveys. The same questionnaire was used in both surveys in order to enable direct comparison of the student's attitudes over this time period.

A request was made that the survey should be issued to four of the six form groups in each year group and the response rates were very encouraging: the total number of students who responded to the first survey was 193 and 203 students responded to the second survey (approximately 80 and 84 per cent response rates, respectively, from these form groups). In addition, a short proforma was administered to form tutors for year groups 8 and 9, in the autumn term, in order to provide retrospective and current contextual information. Eight tutors (four from each year group) completed questionnaires, and their responses are presented where appropriate throughout the report.

The findings from both 'before' and 'after' surveys are presented in the following sections.

2. Survey findings

2.1 Your school

Students were asked a range of questions, in both surveys, on their feelings about their school. Questions addressed particular issues such as vandalism or bullying, the design of the school buildings, and what students liked the most and the least about their school building.

First, students were asked to give their opinions on a number of statements relating to how they felt when they were at school. The responses are presented in Tables 1a and 1b.

Table 1a - Before Survey
Please give us your opinions on the following statements:

	Yes, all the time	Yes, most of the time	No, not really	No, Never	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
I feel positive when I am at school	12	72	12	2	2
It is easy to learn in my school	8	65	22	3	2
I enjoy going to school	13	37	38	10	2
I feel proud of my school	10	33	44	10	3
I feel confident when I am at school	17	55	20	4	4
I am happy at school	17	59	17	4	3
I feel motivated to do my school work	14	49	28	5	4
I feel safe in my school	16	41	33	7	4
I feel valued by my school	11	40	36	6	7

N = 196

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 1b - After Survey

Please give us your opinions on the following statements:

	Yes, all the time	Yes, most of the time	No, not really	No, Never	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
I feel positive when I am at school	11	69	14	4	3
It is easy to learn in my school	15	70	12	2	1
I enjoy going to school	14	47	28	10	1
I feel proud of my school	29	48	19	3	2
I feel confident when I am at school	23	58	14	3	2
I am happy at school	23	57	15	5	1
I feel motivated to do my school work	12	56	25	3	3
I feel safe in my school	34	53	9	3	2
I feel valued by my school	20	46	25	4	4

N = 203

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

In the 'before' survey, while a majority of students responded positively to most of the statements, only half of the students said that they enjoyed going to school and less than half said that they felt proud of their school.

In the 'after' survey, a higher proportion of students responded positively to nearly all the statements. The greatest improvements in attitudes between the two surveys were in the feelings of safety and pride: for example, the proportion of students who said that they felt safe at school most or all of the time increased from 57 per cent to 87 per cent, and the proportion who said that they felt proud of their school increased from 43 per cent to 77 per cent. There were also noticeable increases in the proportions of students who said in the 'after' survey that they enjoyed going to school, felt valued, and found it easy to learn in school.

In the teacher survey, the majority of respondents said that they enjoyed teaching more and felt more motivated and proud to be a teacher at the school following the opening of the new buildings. All eight respondents felt more

able to say, with the new buildings, that the school provided an excellent teaching and learning environment.

The questionnaires then listed a number of potential issues, and respondents were asked how far they felt that these were a problem in their school. The students' responses are presented in Tables 2a and 2b.

Table 2a – Before Survey

Do you think any of the following are problems in your school?

	No, not a problem at all	A bit of a problem	Yes, a big Problem	No response
	%	%	%	%
Vandalism	10	42	42	6
Graffiti	14	50	32	5
Litter	5	28	63	5
Bullying	11	46	39	4
Smoking	10	44	42	4
Other	4	7	16	74

N = 196

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 2b – After Survey

Do you think any of the following are problems in your school?

	No, not a problem at all	A bit of a problem	Yes, a big Problem	No response
	%	%	%	%
Vandalism	66	30	3	3
Graffiti	78	15	4	3
Litter	30	59	8	3
Bullying	27	55	16	3
Smoking	36	34	28	2
Other	2	7	5	86

N = 203

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

The responses to this question indicate that all of the issues were felt to be less of a problem after the opening of the new school buildings. The most noticeable differences concerned vandalism and graffiti which were perceived to be at least 'a bit of a problem' by over 80 per cent of respondents in the 'before' survey, but by only 33 per cent and 19 per cent respectively in the 'after' survey. Over 60 per cent of respondents in the 'before' survey said that litter was a big problem, whereas less than 10 per cent did so in the 'after' survey. Bullying and smoking, which were felt to be a big problem by about 40 per cent of students in the 'before' survey, were identified as such by only 16 per cent and 28 per cent respectively of students in the 'after' survey.

Nearly all the respondents to the teacher survey thought that vandalism, graffiti, litter and smoking were less of a problem with the new school buildings. Bullying, however, was felt to be less of a problem by only three respondents, with the remaining five thinking it was about the same as before.

Moving into a new building has clearly improved perceptions regarding the impact of these problems, but of course it remains to be seen how these perceptions develop as more use is made of the buildings and these become less 'new'.

Both student and teacher surveys included a question relating to the design of the school buildings. The students' responses are presented in Tables 3a and 3b.

Table 3a – Before Survey

How would you describe the design of your school buildings?

	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
Inspirational	16	58	23	3
Boring	60	25	11	4
Comfortable	28	49	18	5
Stimulating	17	45	30	8
Colourful	20	65	10	5
Relaxed	25	56	15	5
Motivational	18	46	31	5
Overwhelming	18	52	25	6
Exciting	21	64	9	6
Scary	21	57	17	5
N = 196				

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

How would you describe the design of your new school buildings?

	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
Inspirational	55	19	22	5
Boring	23	58	14	5
Comfortable	61	22	13	4
Stimulating	37	26	29	9
Colourful	77	14	5	4
Relaxed	57	27	12	4
Motivational	42	26	23	9
Overwhelming	32	39	21	8
Exciting	47	33	17	3
Scary	3	82	9	5

N = 203

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

As compared with the 'before' survey, the 'after' survey showed large increases in the proportions of students who felt that their school buildings were inspirational, colourful, motivational, stimulating, relaxed and comfortable. At the same time, there was a reduction in the proportion of students who felt the buildings were boring or scary.

Respondents to the teacher survey were almost unanimous in thinking that the new buildings were more inspirational, stimulating, motivational, exciting, colourful and comfortable than the old school buildings. There was, however, a spread of views as to whether they were more 'relaxed'.

2.2 Spaces and places in your school

Students were asked a range of questions about places and areas within their school environment. Areas included: where students felt they learned best in their school; where they most enjoyed learning; and whether there were places in the school in which they could do certain activities such as meet with their friends.

In another question in the survey, students were asked about the places in their school in which they felt they could learn best. The question provided a list of possible response options and students were asked to tick all that applied. The responses are presented in Tables 4a and 4b.

Table 4a – Before Survey

Where do you learn best in your school?

	%
Classrooms	60
Learning resource centre/Library	39
Areas where there is a range of ICT	67
Sports hall	46
Practical spaces	47
Outside learning spaces	51
Social spaces in and around school	37
Places where I can learn by myself	40
Other	10
No response	1
N = 196	

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 4b – After Survey

Where do you learn best in your school?

	%
Classrooms	56
Learning resource centre/Library	23
Areas where there is a range of ICT	73
Sports hall	63
Practical spaces	51
Outside learning spaces	48
Social spaces in and around school	43

Places where I can learn by myself	40
Other	7
No response	3
N = 203	

The pattern of students' responses to the question of where they learnt best remained broadly similar across the two surveys. However, two areas did show noticeable differences. These were, firstly, the sports hall, which was ticked by an additional 17 per cent of students in the 'after' survey', and secondly, the learning resource centre/library, which was ticked by 16 per cent *fewer* students in the 'after' survey. A similar question asked students about where they most enjoyed learning in school (see Tables 5a and 5b).

Table 5a – Before Survey

Where do you most enjoy learning in your school?

	%
Classrooms	31
Learning resource centre/Library	28
Areas where there is a range of ICT	60
Sports hall	56
Practical spaces	40
Outside learning spaces	55
Social spaces in and around school	36
Places where I can learn by myself	35
Other	13
No response	2
N = 196	

Table 5b – After Survey

Where do you most enjoy learning in your school?

	%
Classrooms	28
Learning resource centre/Library	17
Areas where there is a range of ICT	74
Sports hall	65
Practical spaces	45
Outside learning spaces	40

Social spaces in and around school	39
Places where I can learn by myself	22
Other	6
No response	2
N = 203	

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Students responded to the question about where they most enjoyed learning in a similar way to the previous question about where they learnt best: the one exception was classrooms – the proportion of students who said that they enjoyed learning in classrooms was half that of students who said it was where they learnt best.

There were a number of differences in the 'before' and 'after' surveys: the sports hall and ICT areas were ticked as areas where they enjoyed learning by more students in the 'after' survey', whereas the learning resource area/library, 'places where I can learn by myself', and outside learning spaces were ticked by fewer students in the second survey. As students completed the first survey during the summer and the second survey in December, timing could be a factor in the last of these differences.

Respondents to the teacher survey felt that general classroom teaching, practical lessons and demonstrations, and ICT and drama facilities were better or much better than before. On the other hand, teaching in the library/resource centre was thought to be less satisfactory than before.

A further question in the student survey asked about activities outside of normal lesson hours, and the responses are presented in Tables 6a and 6b.

Table 6a – Before Survey

Are there places in your school to do the following?

	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
Take part in activities before school begin	55	25	13	7
Take part in activities after school finishes	61	24	8	7
To go to at break times	58	22	14	6
To meet with your friends	74	12	8	6
N = 196				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 6b – After Survey

Are there places in your school to do the following?

	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
Take part in activities before school begin	24	38	29	9
Take part in activities after school finishes	76	12	7	5
To go to at break times	62	16	15	7
To meet with your friends	73	12	9	5
N = 203				

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

The responses to the two surveys are contradictory in that considerably fewer students in the 'after' survey thought there were places to take part in activities *before* school, whereas more thought there were places to take part in activities *after* school. As with the previous question, the time of the year could be a factor here. A similar number of students in both surveys thought there were places to go at break times and to meet friends.

2.3 School facilities

The questionnaire asked students about the facilities in their school and, in particular, how important certain aspects of furniture and equipment were in their school. Their responses are presented in Tables 7a and 7b.

Table 7a – Before Survey

How important are each of the following things to you when you are at school?

	Very Important %	Quite Important %	Not Important %	No response %
Appropriate classroom furniture when you are working	55	32	7	7
A good range of ICT equipment to help you learn	71	21	2	6
Good facilities and equipment in Science and Technology	62	26	5	8
Good Drama and Dance facilities	41	31	20	8
Good sports facilities	67	21	5	7
Good dining facilities for healthy eating	64	22	7	7
Enough equipment in the playground/outside Areas	52	27	16	6
Enough space to move between lessons	64	21	6	9
The right temperature in learning spaces	69	19	4	7
Enough lighting in classrooms and corridors	58	28	7	8
Nice, clean toilets	79	13	2	7
Nice, clean changing rooms	76	13	4	7
Good acoustics	45	30	11	14
Good ventilation	65	19	4	12

N = 196

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

How important are each of the following things to you when you are at school?

	Very Important %	Quite Important %	Not Important %	No response %
Appropriate classroom furniture when you are working	52	39	4	5
A good range of ICT equipment to help you learn	78	17	3	3
Good facilities and equipment in Science and Technology	63	29	5	3
Good Drama and Dance facilities	34	42	18	6
Good sports facilities	74	18	4	3
Good dining facilities for healthy eating	66	24	6	4
Enough equipment in the playground/outside Areas	52	32	13	3
Enough space to move between lessons	67	25	4	4
The right temperature in learning spaces	66	26	4	4
Enough lighting in classrooms and corridors	60	31	5	4
Nice, clean toilets	76	17	3	4
Nice, clean changing rooms	79	16	2	3
Good acoustics	43	42	10	4
Good ventilation	65	27	4	4

N = 203

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

There was little difference in the way students responded between the first and second surveys. This suggests that the movement from old to new school buildings does not significantly alter student perceptions of what is important in terms of facilities and various aspects of the school environment. In both surveys, the facilities the students thought most important were nice, clean toilets and changing rooms, and good ICT and sports facilities.

2.4 Learning opportunities

Students were asked about the various learning opportunities that were available to them in their school. In particular they were asked about the different ways in which they learned in their school and where this learning took place. Students were also asked to identify their favourite subject at school and the types of activities they enjoyed being involved in.

Table 8a – Before Survey

The following list gives examples of different ways you might learn in your school and the different places where your learning might take place (please indicate which of these apply to you)

Ways of working	%	Working spaces	%
Working on my own	54	Working in the resource centre/library	56
Working in small groups	83	Using drama/performing arts facilities	38
Working on whole class activities	51	Using outside spaces	73
Using ICT/new technologies	78	Using sport facilities	72
Working with students in different year groups	20	Working in classrooms	67
Having teacher demonstrations	46	Working in study areas	41
Practical lessons	76		
Project work	55		
No response	5	No response	8

N = 196

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 8b – After Survey

The following list gives examples of different ways you might learn in your school and the different places where your learning might take place (please indicate which of these apply to you)

Ways of working	%	Working spaces	%
Working on my own	63	Working in the resource centre/library	34
Working in small groups	83	Using drama/performing arts facilities	36
Working on whole class activities	52	Using outside spaces	67
Using ICT/new technologies	83	Using sport facilities	74
Working with students in different year groups	22	Working in classrooms	70
Having teacher demonstrations	52	Working in study areas	50
Practical lessons	83		
Project work	52		
No response	3	No response	5
N = 203			

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Again, the patterns of responses seem to be similar across the two surveys, so student preferences about how and where to learn did not change significantly. There were indications, however, that slightly more students worked on their own (up nine per cent), used ICT/new technologies (up five per cent), had teacher demonstrations (up six per cent) and were involved in practical lessons (up seven per cent), after the move to the new buildings. In terms of *places* for learning, the most noticeable changes were a decrease (by 22 per cent) in the number of students working in the resources centre/library, and an increase (by nine per cent) in the numbers working in study areas.

Students were also asked about their favourite subjects in school, in order to assess whether the move to new buildings had made any impact upon curriculum preferences (see Tables 9a and 9b).

Table 9a – Before Survey

What are your favourite subject(s) at school? (please list your three favourite subjects):

	%
PE	55
Art	41
English	32
Science	26
Design technology/DT	18
N = 196	

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
An open-ended, multiple response question with the top five responses shown
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 9b – After Survey

What are your favourite subject(s) at school? (please list your three favourite subjects):

	%
PE	69
ICT	40
Art	37
English	22
Mathematics	19
Science	19
Design technology/DT	16
Geography	16
N = 203	

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
An open-ended, multiple response question with the top eight responses shown
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Over the course of the two surveys, PE consolidated its position as the most popular subject with students: 55 per cent of students identified PE is a favourite subject in the before survey and this increased to 69 per cent in the after survey, probably stimulated by the new sports facilities within the new school. ICT also saw a major increase in popularity (not in the top five subjects in the before survey, but second in the after survey and identified by 40 per cent of students). Mathematics and geography also increased in popularity. English was identified as a favourite subject by ten per cent fewer students in the after survey, and science by seven per cent fewer students.

Table 10a – Before Survey

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities in your school?

	Yes, already Involved	Yes, but no facilities at school	No, don't want to be involved	No response
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**
School Council	14	12	59	15
Sports team	39	24	28	10
Music group	12	14	60	14
Drama group	19	14	53	14
Dance group	13	19	54	14
Arts and Crafts	17	24	46	13
Homework club	9	7	69	15
Other	4	2	12	83

N = 196

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 10b – After Survey

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities in your school?

	Yes, already Involved	Yes, but no facilities at school	No, don't want to be involved	No response
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**
School Council	11	7	64	18
Sports team	43	14	34	9
Music group	12	8	64	16
Drama group	10	7	64	19
Dance group	10	8	63	19
Arts and Crafts	16	11	57	16
Homework club	6	7	69	18
Other	4	3	15	78

N = 203

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

The figures in the second column of Table 10b, when compared with the equivalent figures in Table 10a, give an indication that, for all the activities listed, opportunities to be involved with these facilities/activities had increased, i.e. smaller proportions of students said that these facilities were not available in the after survey.

The next question in the survey asked students about the extent to which the community (in the form of adults and students from other schools) used their school's facilities. Their responses are presented in Tables 11a and 11b.

Table 11a - Before Survey

**Do adults outside school and/or students from other schools use
your school's facilities for learning or other activities?**

	%
Yes	14
No	32
Not sure	45
No response	8
N = 196	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 11b – After Survey

**Do adults outside school and/or students from other schools use
your school's facilities for learning or other activities?**

	%
Yes	36
No	13
Not sure	44
No response	7
N = 203	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

It is clear that the move to new buildings had facilitated an increase in community use of the school's facilities. The proportion of students indicating that the facilities were used, for learning or other activities, increased from 14 per cent in the before survey to 36 per cent in the after survey.

2.5 Views on the new school

The questionnaire asked students about their views on the new school. In particular they were asked whether they had been asked for their views about the design of the new schools (see Tables 12a to 14b).

Table 12a – Before Survey

Since you started at your current school, have you been asked your views about the design of the new school that is being built and due to be opened in September?

	%
Yes, I've been asked a lot	12
Yes, I've been asked a few times	39
No, I haven't been asked at all	35
No response	14
N = 196	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 12b – After Survey

Were you asked your views about the design of your new school that opened in September

	%
Yes, I've been asked a lot	19
Yes, I've been asked a few times	39
No, I haven't been asked at all	32
No response	9
N = 203	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 13a – Before Survey

Would you liked to have been asked about the design of your new school?

	%
Yes	32
No	17
Don't really mind	51
No response	
N = 69	

A single response item filter question
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 13b – After Survey

Would you liked to have been asked about the design of your new school?

	%
Yes	23
No	34
Don't really mind	42
No response	2
N = 65	

A single response item filter question
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 14a – Before Survey

Did people take notice of your views about the new school that is being built?

	%
Yes, my views were taken into account	12
Yes, some of my views were taken into account	17
No, my views were not taken into account	16
I wasn't asked about my views	11
Not sure	36
No response	8
N = 100	

A single response item filter question
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Did people take notice of your views about the new school that is being built?

	%
Yes, my views were taken into account	14
Yes, some of my views were taken into account	18
No, my views were not taken into account	13
I wasn't asked about my views	10
Not sure	40
No response	6
N = 119	

A single response item filter question
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

The figures presented in Tables 12a and 12b suggest that there was a small increase in the proportion of students asked for their views about the design of the new school *after* the move into the new building had taken place. In the before survey just over half of the students (51 per cent) indicated that they had been asked for their views (either a few times or a lot), but this figure increases to 58 per cent in the after survey. There were also small increases in the proportions of students who felt that their views had been taken into account (Tables 14a and 14b). On a slightly more negative note, the responses in Tables 13a and 13b suggest a possibility that some students may have become rather 'tired' of being consulted (or they felt that this was no longer necessary): the proportion who said that they would like to have been asked about the design of their new school decreased from 32 per cent to 23 per cent in the second survey.

Most of the eight teachers who responded to the teacher survey said that they felt that they had had some opportunities to give their views about the design of the new school, and felt that some of their views had been taken into account. Unlike the students, however, they were keen to have more consultation.

Table 15a – Before Survey

In the space below please write one or two sentences saying what you think about the design of your new school.

	%
Good/Fantastic/Brilliant	20
Nice	18

	9
Colourful	9
Good design	8
Spacious	7
No response	13

N = 100

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
An open-ended, multiple response filter question with the top five responses shown
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 15b – After Survey

In the space below please write one or two sentences saying what you think about the design of your new school.

	%
Colourful	24
Good design	11
Big	11
Nice	9
Good/Fantastic/Brilliant	9
OK/alright	9
Spacious	7
Modern/state of the art	5
No response	23

N = 203

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
An open-ended, multiple response filter question with the top five responses shown
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

It is apparent that by the time of the second survey, students were rather more impressed with the colour and size of the buildings, though other dimensions, such as space and quality of design featured in both sets of survey responses.

Teachers were very positive in their descriptive responses. They described the new buildings as 'generally excellent', 'well designed and thought out'. One said that the programme was 'a fantastic initiative', and another commented that: 'I feel proud to teach in such an inspirational and exciting school'.

2.6 The future

Students were asked questions about how well they thought they would do at school (Tables 16a and 16b) and whether they would recommend the school to others (Tables 17a and 17b).

How well do you think you will do in your assessments at the end of the year?

	%
Very well	22
Quite well	38
OK	27
Not very well	5
No response	8
N = 196	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 16b – After Survey

How well do you think you will do in your assessments at the end of the year?

	%
Very well	24
Quite well	43
OK	21
Not very well	2
No response	10
N = 203	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

For whatever reason, students did have slightly improved confidence levels by the time of the second survey. For example, the proportion who felt that they would do very well in their end of year assessments increased slightly, from 22 per cent to 24 per cent, and the proportions expressing the view that they would do quite well increased from 38 to 43 per cent.

Table 17a – Before Survey

Would you recommend your school to another student who was thinking of coming to your existing school?

	%
Yes, definitely	17
Yes, probably	41
No	15
Not sure	18
No response	9
N = 196	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 17b – After Survey

Would you recommend your school to another student who was thinking of coming to your existing school?

	%
Yes, definitely	31
Yes, probably	39
No	7
Not sure	14
No response	9
N = 196	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Students' image of the school had also improved. By the time of the after survey, 31 per cent of respondents said that they would 'definitely' recommend the school to another student who was thinking of coming to the school, compared with only 17 per cent in the before survey.

There was also an improvement in students' further educational expectations, with the proportion expecting to stay on in the sixth form or to go to college increasing from 64 per cent to 77 per cent (Tables 18a and 18b). The proportion expecting to go into training or employment declined from 54 per cent to 40 per cent. The proportion anticipating going to university, however, declined slightly from 37 per cent to 35 per cent.

Table 18a – Before Survey

What do you think you will do when you leave school?

	%
Stay at school in the sixth form	31
Go to college full-time	33
Go on a training course full-time	16
Get a job with training	30
Get a job without training	8
Go to university	37
No idea yet	32
No response	8
N = 203	

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 18b – After Survey

What do you think you will do when you leave school?

	%
Stay at school in the sixth form	41
Go to college full-time	36
Go on a training course full-time	10
Get a job with training	24
Get a job without training	6
Go to university	35
No idea yet	24
No response	8
N = 196	

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

The final question in the survey asked students if they felt that their school was environmentally friendly. The responses to this question, presented in Tables 19a and 19b, provide strong evidence that the new school was seen as being environmentally friendly. The proportion of students agreeing that the school had this quality more than doubled, from 24 per cent to 48 per cent.

Table 19a – Before Survey

Do you think your school is environmentally friendly?

	%
Yes	24
No	30
Not sure	40
No response	7
N = 196	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

Table 19b – After Survey

Do you think your school is environmentally friendly?

	%
Yes	55
No	8
Not sure	25
No response	12
N = 196	

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Survey on the effect of the school environment, 2007.

3.   Summary and conclusions

3.1 The context

Before summarising the key findings that have emerged from these surveys, it is worth re-emphasising the context of the study and briefly setting out the caveats that need to be applied to the research. In particular, in considering these findings, the following points need to be borne in mind:

- The surveys were conducted at particular points of time and, although their timing was logical, it should be remembered that these are 'snapshots' of student attitudes and such attitudes will clearly change and evolve over time.

- Although the construction and occupation of new buildings is a major initiative, and as such is likely to have a considerable effect on student attitudes, it also needs to be borne in mind that other factors may have had an effect, including any pastoral, curricular or staffing changes within the school.

- The survey was conducted in only one school, so there may be particular school factors (physical, social, administrative and educational) that may have affected student attitudes. It is to be hoped, however, that, as this was one of the first BSF schools, at least some of the findings should have a more general applicability. The questionnaire certainly worked well and could be used as a template in other schools with changing environments.

3.2 Summary and conclusions

On the whole the findings from the before and after surveys were very positive. There is a good deal of evidence to indicate that student attitudes had become more positive after the move into the new school buildings. In particular the proportions of students:

- who said that they **felt safe** at school most or all of the time increased from 57 to 87 per cent
- who said that they **felt proud** of their school increased from 43 to 77 per cent
- who said that they **enjoyed going to school** increased from 50 to 61 per cent

- who perceived that **vandalism** was at least 'a bit of a problem' in their school decreased from 84 per cent of respondents to 33 per cent

- who perceived that **bullying** was a big problem decreased from 39 per cent of students in the 'before' survey, to 16 per cent in the 'after' survey

- who expected to **stay on in the sixth form** or to go to college increased from 64 per cent to 77 per cent.

As noted in the previous section, it is not possible to attribute a 'causal link' between the improved attitudes of the students and the move to the new BSF building, but the numbers and levels of positive findings do suggest a strong association between the move to the new surroundings and improvements in students' outlooks regarding their experience of school and their expectation for the future.