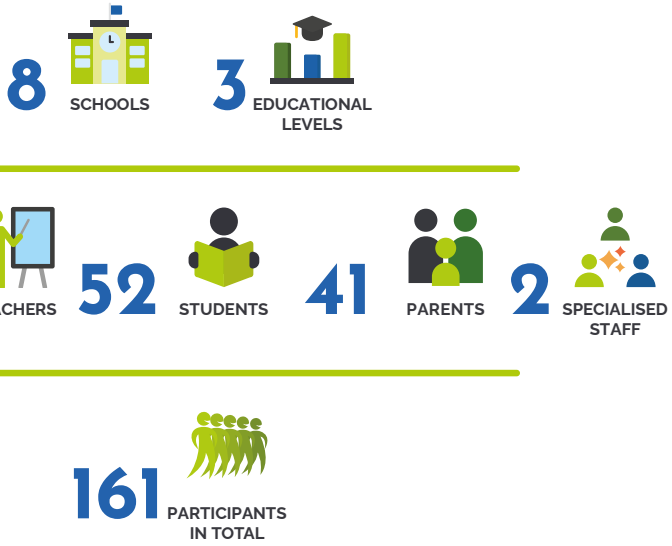
LINEup
Longitudinal Data For INequalities In Education

EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL IN FRANCE
INSIGHTS FROM THE LINEup QUALITATIVE STUDY

1. LINEup qualitative research at a glance - Introduction

How can schools support student engagement with school?

LINEup's qualitative research explores how educational inequalities are experienced and addressed in everyday school life. The study combines the perspectives of school leaders, teachers, specialised staff, students and parents to understand how school organisation, teaching practices, relationships and local contexts can support engagement, learning and more equitable educational opportunities. In France, the research examined 8 schools across primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, selected to capture different combinations of socioeconomic contexts and school performance.



2. What did we learn? - Three Key Findings

Trust and strong relationships underpin student engagement and learning.

Across the eight schools, teachers and students consistently highlighted the importance of trust, emotional security and individual knowledge of students as key conditions for learning.

The existence of support provision does not guarantee accessibility or effectiveness.

Similar forms of provision (such as academic support, guidance or financial assistance) may exist across schools, but their uptake and relevance depend on how visible and understandable they are, when they are offered, and how they are perceived by students and families.

Sustaining effective responses requires stable resources, beyond individual commitment alone.

Schools often rely on staff initiative, coordination and locally built partnerships to make support work.Where these responses are not supported by sufficiently stable resources, time, or institutional arrangements, they may be more difficult to sustain over time.

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3. What helps? - Enabling Conditions & Practices

- Distributed and collaborative leadership, with clearly identified coordination responsibilities.
- Dedicated time for coordination and information-sharing among professionals, both within schools and with external partners.
- Clear expectations combined with varied and structured teaching practices.
- Monitoring of support provision that focuses on its effective reach: who accesses it, how it is understood, and whether it addresses identified needs.
- Sustained relationships with families and local partners, including local authorities, health and social services, and community organisations.

4. What gets in the way? - Structural & Contextual Constraints

- A gap between the broadening range of responsibilities assigned to schools and the corresponding availability of time, staff, and training.
- Fragmented responsibilities across schools and other services (including health, social services, child protection, and local authorities) each operating according to its own criteria and timelines, making it more difficult to build a continuous response.
- A mismatch between standardised national frameworks and categories and the diversity of needs observed locally, limiting schools' capacity to translate their detailed knowledge of local circumstances into concrete adaptations.

5. Three messages to take away - Implications for Policy & Practice

Shift the focus from expanding provision to strengthening implementation capacity.
The main challenge is not necessarily to create additional programmes, but to ensure that school teams have sufficient time, stable staffing, opportunities for coordination, and predictable resources to make existing provision genuinely accessible and coherent.

Support should be assessed by its effective reach, rather than its formal existence alone.
The existence of a programme does not in itself mean that students and families can access it or find it useful. Looking at who actually takes part, what barriers they encounter and how well the provision responds to identified needs can help inform decisions about whether and how it should be adapted.

Combine national guarantees with capacity for local adaptation.
The findings point to the value of allowing schools to adjust resources and organisational arrangements in response to locally identified social, territorial and educational needs, while ensuring that responsibility for addressing structural inequalities does not fall on school staff alone.

6. Voices from the School Community



Student
"What I appreciate is that teachers take the time to explain things. When we don't understand, they explain again."

Teacher
"We are being asked to include more and more students, but we are not given the human resources to do so under the right conditions."

Parent
"We are fortunate to have dedicated staff who connect all aspects of our children's school lives [...] and have a 360-degree view of the child."

School leader
"What we feel is this gap between how things are perceived at the top and what is happening on the ground."

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