

Report on

Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP)

Punjab



Report on
Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP)
in Punjab

Bridging Technical Assistance for Governments- (B-TAG) Punjab

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List of Acronyms

Term	Full Form
ASP	Afternoon Schools Programme
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
SED	School Education Department
GoPb	Government of Punjab
PC-I	Planning Commission - Form I
TALEEM	Transformation in Access, Learning, and Equity and Educational Management
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
PECTAA	Punjab Education, Curriculum, Training and Assessment Authority
PMIU	Programme Monitoring & Implementation Unit
SIS	School Information System
SBA	School-Based Assessment
DG M&E	Directorate General Monitoring & Evaluation
AEO	Assistant Education Officer
MEA	Monitoring & Evaluation Assistant
PESP	Punjab Education Sector Plan
APF	Assessment Policy Framework
PEC	Punjab Examination Commission
DfID	Department for International Development
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
STRIDE	Sustainable Transition and Retention in Delivering Education
IBAN	International Bank Account Number
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
B-TAG	Bridging Technical Assistance for Governments (B-TAG)

Executive Summary

Punjab faces a persistent education crisis, with approximately 26.8% of its school-age population classified as out-of-school children (OOSC). This issue is particularly pronounced among girls (27.8%) and rural populations (31.5%). At the middle school level, these disparities are even more acute, with 54% of middle school-aged girls out of school due to socio-cultural barriers, safety concerns, and lack of access to schools. The traditional approaches i.e., constructing new middle schools or upgrading existing primary schools are financially demanding and time-consuming. To address this, the Government of Punjab introduced the *Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP)* as a scalable, low-cost alternative to rapidly expand access to middle-level education.

Launched initially as a pilot in 2019 in four districts under the STRIDE programme, supported by DfID (now FCDO), the initiative established 180 afternoon schools and reached over 8,400 out-of-school children at risk of dropping out. Building on this early success, the programme expanded to 22 districts and then scaled up to all 36 districts in 2021. The programme utilizes existing primary school infrastructure to run middle-level classes in the afternoon, thereby bypassing the need for new construction. Currently in Punjab, the ASP operates under two modalities: the PC-I mode and under the TALEEM programme, the latter supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). While the overarching model is the same, the implementation quality varies significantly between the two modalities.

TALEEM-run afternoon schools offer a more structured and better-supported environment. Teachers are trained, salaries are disbursed on time directly to school accounts via IBAN, and regular monitoring including third-party validations is in place. These schools have shown remarkable resilience and potential for long-term sustainability, with only 27 closures reported (mainly due to low enrolments). In contrast, PC-I mode schools have struggled due to lack of training, delayed salary payments, and operational challenges, leading to over 1,200 school closures out of an initial 7,008 which is a significant attrition rate that underscores the need for a more standardized support framework.

The primary objective of this report is to evaluate whether ASP effectively increases educational access and how it performs in terms of student learning outcomes compared to regular middle schools. For this purpose, enrolment data was sourced from the School Information System (SIS), while learning outcomes were analysed using School-Based Assessment (SBA) results for the academic year 2023–24. Rigorous data validation processes, including field-level verifications and telephonic checks, were applied to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The findings of the study are encouraging. ASP currently enrolls over 273,000 students, many of whom would have remained out of school in the absence of this programme. Enrolment growth in afternoon schools from 2022 to 2023 significantly outpaced that of regular middle schools, with TALEEM-run schools showing a 29.63% increase. Although all school types experienced a drop

in reported enrolment from 2023 to 2024 due to data cleaning exercises, the net increase in ASP enrolment from 2022 to 2024 confirms the programme’s effectiveness in expanding access.

Learning outcome analysis reveals that when comparing all afternoon schools with regular middle schools, student performance is largely similar across English, Urdu, Maths, and Islamiyat. However, students in regular middle schools perform better in Computer Science, likely due to IT infrastructure limitations in ASP schools. Notably, when segregated at the subset level, TALEEM-run schools outperform regular middle schools and non-TALEEM schools for all subjects, highlighting the critical role of implementation quality.

In summary, the Afternoon Schools Programme is a viable and impactful solution to Punjab’s education access challenges. However, its full potential can only be realized by ensuring consistency in implementation modalities. Scaling the best practices of the TALEEM model, particularly in areas of teacher training, financial disbursement, and monitoring, can ensure that all ASP schools provide equitable and high-quality education. The evidence gathered through this report serves as a strong foundation for refining policy and optimizing resource allocation to sustain and scale this essential initiative across Punjab.

1. Desk Review

1.1: The Challenge

Punjab has a large population of Out-of-School Children (OOSC) with 26.8% of the total school-going aged population out of school.¹ This educational crisis represents a significant challenge. The magnitude of this issue becomes even more concerning when analysing the gender disparity - the challenge is notably more severe among girls with 27.8% (4.82 million) of the total school-age (5-16) girls out of school, compared to boys. This highlights deep-rooted barriers that continue to impede access to education in the province.

The geographical distribution of OOSC reveals another layer of educational inequality. In rural areas, the situation is particularly alarming with 31.5% (6.86 million) school-age children not enrolled in any educational institution.² This urban-rural divide points to systemic issues including insufficient school infrastructure, transportation challenges, and economic constraints that disproportionately affect children in remote and underserved communities.

When examining the data across educational levels, the primary level (age 5-9) shows concerning statistics with 3.38 million children in Punjab out of school. The gender breakdown at this critical foundational level reveals that 52% (1.76 million) of out-of-school children are girls and 48% (1.62 million) are boys.³ This imbalance at the entry point of formal education creates ripple effects throughout the educational journey, contributing to widening gender gaps in higher education and workforce participation.

Beyond access issues, Punjab also faces significant challenges with educational retention and completion rates. Historical data from the past decade (2013-2023) shows a concerning pattern - of the students who started class 1, only 60.1% of girls and 55.9% of boys completed class 10.⁴ This represents a substantial dropout rate that undermines educational investments and limits human capital development in the province. Interestingly, while girls face greater barriers to initial enrolment, those who do enter the system demonstrate slightly better persistence than boys, pointing to the complexity of gender-related educational challenges in the province.

The middle school level presents particular challenges for girls' education in Punjab. Middle-school aged girls comprise 54% of the OOSC population at this level. This spike in female exclusion during adolescence can be attributed to multiple factors including early marriage, household responsibilities, safety concerns, and cultural restrictions on girls' mobility as they grow older. This critical transitional phase represents a key intervention point for programmes seeking to improve educational outcomes for girls.

¹ 7th Population and Housing Census, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023

² Ibid.

³ PSLM 2019-20 and Population Census 2023

⁴ School Information System (SIS), PMIU-PESRP, 2014-23

1.1.1 Analysis of Educational Barriers in Punjab

Socioeconomic Factors

The high percentage of out-of-school children in Punjab can be attributed to various socioeconomic factors that create barriers to education access and retention. Poverty remains a fundamental obstacle, forcing families to prioritize immediate economic needs over long-term educational benefits. In resource-constrained households, children often become economic contributors at an early age, with boys typically engaged in wage labour and girls in domestic work. This economic necessity frequently supersedes educational aspirations, particularly in rural areas where 31.5% of school-age children remain out of school.⁵

The direct and indirect costs of education present another significant barrier. While public education in Punjab is nominally free, associated expenses for uniforms, books, transportation, and other materials create financial burdens that many families cannot sustain. These economic pressures contribute substantially to the troubling statistics showing that only 60.1% of girls and 55.9% of boys who start primary school complete class 10.

Gender-Specific Challenges

The disproportionate impact of educational exclusion on girls (27.8% of school-age girls out of school compared to the overall rate of 26.8%) reflects persistent gender biases in Pakistani society. Girls' education often receives lower priority in family resource allocation decisions, particularly in conservative communities. As girls approach adolescence, cultural concerns about their safety and mobility intensify, contributing to the observation that middle-school aged girls comprise 54% of the OOSC population at that level.

The shortage of gender-appropriate facilities further constrains girls' educational opportunities, especially in rural areas. Many families hesitate to send daughters to schools without proper boundary walls, separate toilets, or female staff. These gender-specific barriers help explain why 52% (1.76 million) of out-of-school children at the primary level are girls, despite growing recognition of the importance of female education.

1.2 Potential Solution

Addressing the issue of access to education at the middle level in Punjab requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes cost-effective and scalable solutions. One option can be constructing new middle schools in underserved areas, particularly rural regions where the majority of out-of-school children reside. This would directly increase access to education by providing dedicated facilities for middle-level students. However, constructing new schools requires substantial financial investment, land acquisition, and long-term operational costs, which may not be feasible for resource-constrained regions like Punjab.

Another potential solution is upgrading existing primary schools to cater to middle-level students. This involves hiring additional staff, including subject-specific teachers, and providing essential facilities such as science labs, libraries, and separate toilets for girls. Upgrading schools can help

⁵ 7th Population and Housing Census, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023

bridge the gap between primary and middle-level education while leveraging existing infrastructure. However, this approach also demands significant funding and logistical planning to ensure quality education is maintained across all levels.

Improving transportation services could also play a vital role in enhancing access to middle-level education. Many children in rural areas face challenges traveling long distances to attend school. Introducing subsidized transportation options or school buses could reduce dropout rates and encourage enrolment, particularly for girls who face mobility restrictions due to cultural norms. While this solution addresses accessibility barriers, it does not resolve issues related to the availability of middle-level schools in close proximity.

Among these options, one of the most cost-efficient and practical solutions for resource-constrained regions like Punjab is implementing an Afternoon Schools Programme. This initiative involves utilizing existing primary school premises to run middle-level classes during the afternoon hours. By repurposing existing infrastructure, the programme minimizes construction costs while addressing the immediate need for middle-level education. Additionally, this model allows for flexible scheduling, which can accommodate community-specific needs and encourage higher enrolment rates for girls who may have household responsibilities in the morning. The Afternoon Schools Programme represents a scalable and sustainable approach that aligns with the province's financial limitations while addressing the critical issue of educational access at the middle level.

The Afternoon Schools Programme directly addresses challenges discussed earlier by utilizing existing primary school infrastructure to offer middle-level education during the afternoon hours. This innovative approach eliminates the need for constructing new schools while ensuring that students, particularly girls, have access to education close to home in a safe and familiar environment. By leveraging existing resources, the programme minimizes costs and provides a practical solution for resource-constrained regions like Punjab, making it a promising model for addressing the province's educational access crisis at the middle level.

1.3 Punjab's Approach - Afternoon Schools Programme

The province of Punjab has been tackling with significant challenges in providing access to middle-level education, particularly due to a shortage of middle schools. This supply-side constraint has resulted in higher dropout rates after primary school and an increased number of out-of-school children (OOSC) in the 10-14 age group. The School Education Department (SED) has faced difficulties in upgrading existing primary schools or constructing new middle schools due to limited financial resources available to the Government of Punjab (GoPb). These challenges have necessitated innovative solutions to address the growing education crisis.

To tackle this issue, Punjab introduced the Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP) as a cost-efficient and innovative approach to expand access to middle-level education. Launched as a pilot project in four districts of Punjab in 2019, with support from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the programme aimed to utilize existing primary school infrastructure by running middle-grade classes during afternoon hours. This approach allowed the province to bypass the need for constructing new schools while addressing the immediate demand for middle-level education in remote areas. The pilot demonstrated positive outcomes, including increased

enrolment rates, validating the potential of ASP as an effective strategy. The ASP was scaled up to all 36 districts in 2021.

The Afternoon Schools Programme aligns with Punjab’s broader educational goals and priorities outlined in key policy documents such as the Punjab Education Sector Plan (PESP) 2019/20–2023/24, GoPb’s New Deal for Education 2018–2023, and Punjab Education Sector Plan (PESP) 2025–2030.

1.3.1 Schools Selection⁶

The Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP) adopts a systematic approach to selecting primary schools for conversion into middle schools during afternoon hours. The criteria ensure that the programme targets areas with the highest need while making efficient use of existing resources.

- For primary schools within municipal limits, enrolment in grades 4 and 5 must be at least 20 boys and 15 girls in each grade to qualify for ASP.
- For schools outside municipal limits, the cumulative enrolment in grades 4 and 5 must meet the same thresholds - 20 boys and 15 girls.
- Additionally, priority is given to schools where no public middle school exists within a radius of 1 kilometer for both boys and girls. This ensures that ASP addresses gaps in access to middle-level education, particularly in underserved and remote areas.

1.3.2 Teachers Engagement⁷

The engagement of teachers for ASP prioritizes those already employed at the selected primary schools, ensuring continuity and familiarity for students transitioning to middle grades. In cases where there is a shortage or non-availability of teachers within the school, educators from nearby schools are recruited to fill the gap. Additionally, headteachers of the primary schools are required to teach during the afternoon shift.

To run new afternoon school initially, the minimum enrolment must be 10 in class 6
Second teacher may be hired when enrolment exceeds 20 students
Third teacher may be engaged when overall enrolment is between 20 and 60
Fourth teacher is hired when overall enrolment exceeds 60 students

To support the operational needs of afternoon schools, one support staff member is initially hired to assist with administrative and logistical tasks. When enrolment exceeds 60 students, a second support staff member is engaged to ensure smooth functioning of the programme. This flexible staffing model allows ASP to adapt to varying enrolment levels while maintaining cost efficiency.

1.3.3 Salaries/Honoraria

The financial model of ASP is designed to incentivize participation while remaining cost-effective for resource-constrained regions like Punjab. Afternoon staff are compensated as follows: headteachers receive PKR 18,000 per month, teachers are paid PKR 15,000 per month, and support

⁶ Government’s notification on guidelines for ASP schools

⁷ Ibid.

staff earn PKR 7,000 per month. Importantly, staff are not paid during summer breaks when schools are closed, ensuring that funds are allocated efficiently throughout the academic year. This payment structure reflects a balanced approach to rewarding educators and support staff while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

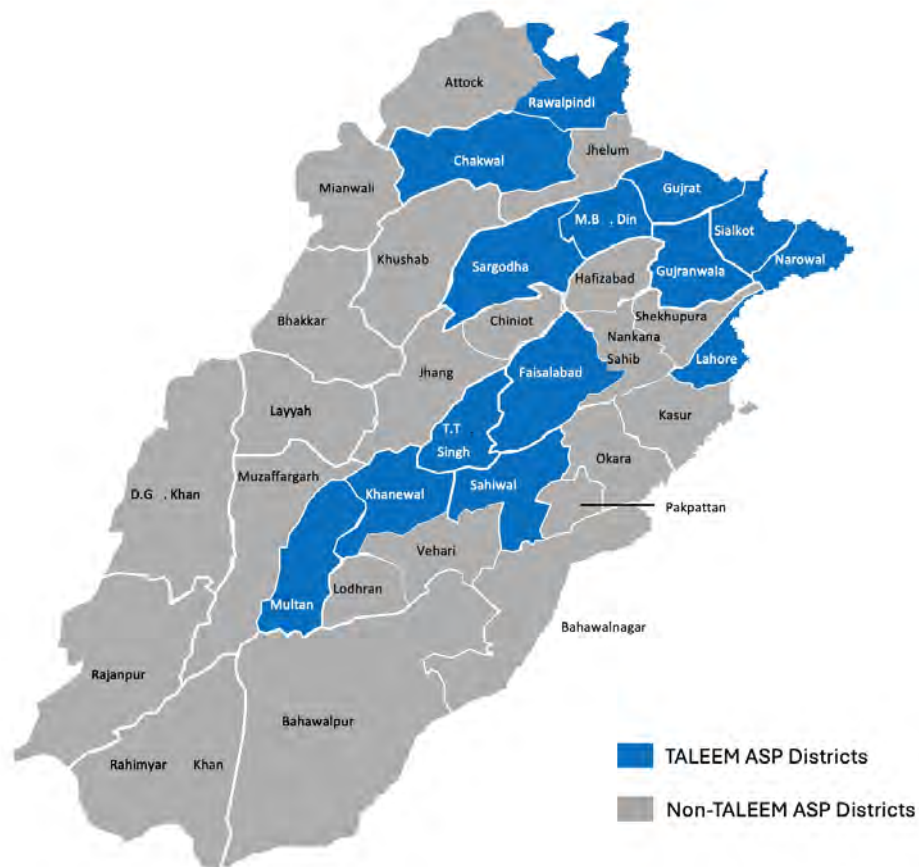
1.3.4 District wise Implementation

In Punjab, the afternoon schools programme is running in all 36 districts. After the pilot, the programme has been running in 22 districts under the PC-I modality in all districts while in remaining 14 districts, the majority of the total i.e., 1,500 of 2,200 afternoon schools are running under the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) funded TALEEM programme.

Currently, the Afternoon Schools Programme operates under two distinct modalities: the TALEEM-run schools and the PC-I mode schools. These two approaches differ significantly in terms of implementation, teacher support, and programme sustainability. TALEEM-run afternoon schools, funded by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), are provided with comprehensive support to ensure effective functioning. Teachers in these schools received formal training to enhance their instructional skills, equipping them to deliver quality education. Salaries for teachers and staff are disbursed on time directly into the schools' accounts through IBAN numbers, ensuring financial stability and reducing uncertainty. Additionally, TALEEM-run schools benefit from regular monitoring by dedicated teams and third-party validations, which help maintain accountability and ensure adherence to programme objectives. This robust support system has contributed to the success of TALEEM-run schools, with only 27 closures reported, primarily due to low enrolments.

In contrast, PC-I mode afternoon schools faced several challenges, especially during early phase of implementation, that have hindered their effectiveness. Unlike their TALEEM counterparts, teachers in PC-I mode schools have not received formal training, limiting their capacity to deliver quality education. Furthermore, delays in salary disbursements have created financial uncertainty for teachers, leading to operational challenges and affecting teacher morale. These issues have resulted in implementation difficulties during the early phases of the program, contributing to the closure of over 1,200 PC-I mode schools out of the initial 7,000. This stark contrast highlights the importance of structured support mechanisms like those provided under the TALEEM programme in ensuring the sustainability and success of afternoon schools.

The map below presents coverage of afternoon schools by district:



2. Methodology

2.1 Need and Objectives of the Study

The Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP) has been implemented across 36 districts in Punjab, Pakistan, to address critical gaps in middle-level education. While the programme has expanded significantly since its pilot phase, there remains a lack of comprehensive research evaluating its long-term effectiveness. Except for one detailed study conducted by the Directorate General Monitoring & Evaluation (DG M&E) focusing on the pilot phase, no research has been conducted to analyse enrolment trends over time or compare ASP schools with regular morning shift schools. Furthermore, there has been no review of the program's impact on learning outcomes, which, even though is not a core focus of ASP, is a crucial indicator of educational success. This gap in evidence necessitates a detailed study to understand ASP's effectiveness comprehensively and provide insights for policy refinement.

The objectives of this study are to

- conduct a comparative analysis of enrolment trends over time, and
- evaluate learning outcomes in afternoon schools compared to regular morning schools
- provide actionable recommendations to policy makers for ensuring sustainability and maximizing impact of ASP in Punjab

By examining enrolment data, the study aims to identify patterns and assess whether ASP is successfully increasing access to middle-level education. Additionally, comparing learning outcomes between the two types of schools will provide critical insights into the quality of education offered under ASP. These findings will help policymakers make informed decisions about scaling the programme and addressing any shortcomings, ensuring that ASP not only improves access but also delivers meaningful educational results.

2.2 Data Collection

This study is being conducted by the B-TAG team with the support and guidance of the School Education Department (SED) and its attached departments, including the Programme Monitoring & Implementation Unit (PMIU). The PMIU serves as the field monitoring and implementation arm of SED, with Monitoring & Evaluation Assistants (MEAs) stationed in each district to perform regular monthly monitoring of schools. Additionally, PMIU manages a digital data reporting platform called the School Information System (SIS), which is used by all headteachers, including those of afternoon schools, to report essential information such as class and gender-wise enrolments. For this study, enrolment data was obtained directly from SIS through PMIU, ensuring accurate and comprehensive coverage of schools under the Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP).

Regarding learning outcomes, data collection posed initial challenges as this information was not previously reported. SED has implemented the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) (2019) through the Punjab Examination Commission (PEC), which provides a mechanism for standardized assessments. Under APF, PEC developed a database of questionnaires known as Item-Bank and a user interface that allows schools to generate exams using randomized questions from the standardized item bank. These assessments, referred to as School-Based Assessments

(SBAs), are conducted annually in every school, including regular morning middle schools and ASP schools. Although SBA results were earlier maintained at the school level without centralized reporting, the B-TAG team collaborated with PMIU to develop a dedicated module for reporting SBA results specifically for grades 6–8. For this study, learning outcomes data was collected for the academic year 2023–24 through this newly developed platform, enabling a comparative analysis of ASP schools and regular morning schools.

2.3 Data Validity Checks

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the collected data, several layers of validation were built into the study. These checks were applied to both enrolment data and learning outcomes.

2.3.1 Enrolment Data Validation

System-Based Validation

To ensure accurate enrolment reporting, the study benefitted from a multi-tiered validation system grounded in the Annual School Census (ASC) framework. Although initial data came through self-reported School Information System (SIS), it was subject to automated validation checks. These system-based checks applied logic tests to identify outliers and inconsistencies by comparing reported values against defined parameters and historical trends. This helped catch unusual figures or input errors early in the process.

Field-Level Verification

Beyond the system level in-build checks, field-level verification is carried out through the School Education Department's institutional structure. To finalize data for Annual Schools Census, the District Education Authorities (DEAs) oversee the process of data validation with Assistant Education Officers (AEOs) conducting on-ground verifications within their jurisdictions. Simultaneously, Monitoring & Evaluation Assistants (MEAs) carry out independent data verification.

Discrepancy Resolution

If any inconsistencies are detected during verification, a formal reconciliation process is triggered. Schools are required to either rectify the data or provide justification for any substantial deviations from expected enrolment trends. This ensures transparency and accountability in reported data.

2.3.2 Learning Outcomes Data Validation

Data Cleaning and Standardization

Once the data was collected, a structured data cleaning process was implemented. This involved treating missing values, identifying and investigating statistical anomalies, and aligning data formats for consistency across records. The goal was to prepare a clean and analysable dataset with minimal distortions.

Telephonic Verification

To further ensure accuracy, a stratified random sample of 20 schools from 6 districts was selected for telephonic verification. During these calls, school staff were asked to confirm key performance indicators, including grade-level scores. Any major differences between reported and confirmed data triggered a deeper review, ensuring that final records genuinely reflected student performance across all shifts, including both morning and afternoon sessions.

2.4 Analysis Approach

The analysis will cover both enrolment and learning outcomes, using a structured comparison framework to assess differences across school types and shifts. The core comparisons include:

Levels of Comparison

We will examine differences at four key levels:

- Regular morning shift middle schools vs. all afternoon schools
- Regular morning shift middle schools vs. TALEEM-run afternoon schools
- Regular morning shift middle schools vs. non-TALEEM-run afternoon schools
- TALEEM-run vs. non-TALEEM-run afternoon schools

These comparisons will help isolate the impact of afternoon shift models against standard public schooling arrangements.

Enrolment Data Analysis

For enrolment, we will take a longitudinal approach, analysing trends over time to assess growth or changes in student numbers. This will allow us to see whether enrolment levels in different school types are increasing, stable, or declining, and how TALEEM-run schools perform relative to others in attracting and retaining students.

For comparison of enrolment, the absolute numbers are appropriate as the number of schools in each category vary significantly. Hence, we take the average enrolment by dividing the total number of students in the specific category divided by the total number of schools of that category.

$$\text{Average Enrolment} = \frac{[Total\ Students]_i}{[Total\ Schools]_i}$$

Where,

$$i = \{\text{Regular middle, Afternoon all, Afternoon TALEEM, Afternoon non-TALEEM}\}$$

Learning Outcomes Analysis

To assess learning outcomes, we will use econometric techniques to evaluate both the direction and magnitude of differences across the school types. The analysis will also test for statistical significance, helping determine whether observed differences in student performance are

meaningful and not due to chance. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of afternoon school models, especially those operated under the TALEEM initiative.

The simple linear regression model for analysis of learning outcomes is represented as under:

$$[Learning\ Outcomes]_s = \beta_0 + \beta_1[School\ Category] + error$$

Where,

- Learning outcomes data is at the student level, s represent the relevant subject i.e., English, Urdu, Maths, Computer, and Islamiyat.
- School category is a dummy variable representing the category of school for level of which comparison is being made. For example, it takes the value of 1 for all afternoon and 0 for regular middle schools when comparing regular middle schools vs. afternoon schools (overall).

The coefficient β_1 will tell the magnitude of difference in average learning outcome for the particular subject across the defined categories of school.

2.5 Limitations

While significant efforts were made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data used in this study, certain limitations must be acknowledged - particularly in relation to learning outcomes data. This is the first time that School-Based Assessment (SBA) results have been collected centrally for grades 6–8 in afternoon schools. Although a dedicated reporting module was developed in collaboration with PMIU, the data was entered by schoolteachers without prior orientation or comprehensive training on the new system.

Despite the structured data cleaning processes, including anomaly checks and telephonic verification of a sample of schools, there remains room for improvement in data quality. Inconsistent reporting practices and limited familiarity with digital data entry of SBA records among some teachers may have introduced minor inaccuracies or inconsistencies in the results.

Future studies are encouraged to build on this initial exercise by incorporating teacher orientation sessions, user training, and more robust digital data validation tools. Doing so will strengthen the reliability of learning outcomes data and enhance the overall quality of evidence available to support policy decisions related to the Afternoon Schools Programme.

3. Results and Findings

This section presents the findings from analysis of enrolment trends and learning outcomes.

3.1 High Level Summary

The analysis provides answers to the research questions of the study i.e., whether the afternoon schools address the issue of access and how do they perform in terms of student learning in comparison to regular middle schools. The findings are summarized as under:

- **Enrolment** – The afternoon schools do address the issue of access; more than 270,000 students, who were otherwise out of school or were at the risk of being out of school are enrolled in afternoon schools and the enrolment growth in afternoon schools is stronger than the regular middle schools
- **Learning** – When compared overall i.e., regular middle schools with all afternoon schools, the afternoon schools are found to be at par with the regular middle schools with variation at the subject level analysis. However, interesting trends are observed when analysis is done at the subset level of afternoon schools i.e., TALEEM run and non-TALEEM run afternoon schools;
 - The TALEEM run afternoon schools outperform regular middle schools on all subjects with statistically significant results,
 - The regular middle schools outperform the non TALEEM run afternoon schools

3.2 Enrolment Trend Analysis

The table below presents the number of students enrolled in each category of school during 2022, 2023 and 2024. The data is taken from Annual Schools Census (ASC), Programme Monitoring & Implementation Unit (PMIU) for the relevant years.

School Type	Enrolment 2022	Enrolment 2023	Enrolment 2024	Enrolment Growth 2022 to 23	Enrolment Growth 2023 to 24 *
Regular Middle	604,006	629,825	566,428	4.27%	-10.07%
Afternoon (overall)	240,696	303,250	273,985	25.99%	-9.65%
Afternoon (TALEEM)	69,007	89,454	82,116	29.63%	-8.20%
Afternoon (non-TALEEM)	171,689	213,796	191,869	24.53%	-10.26%

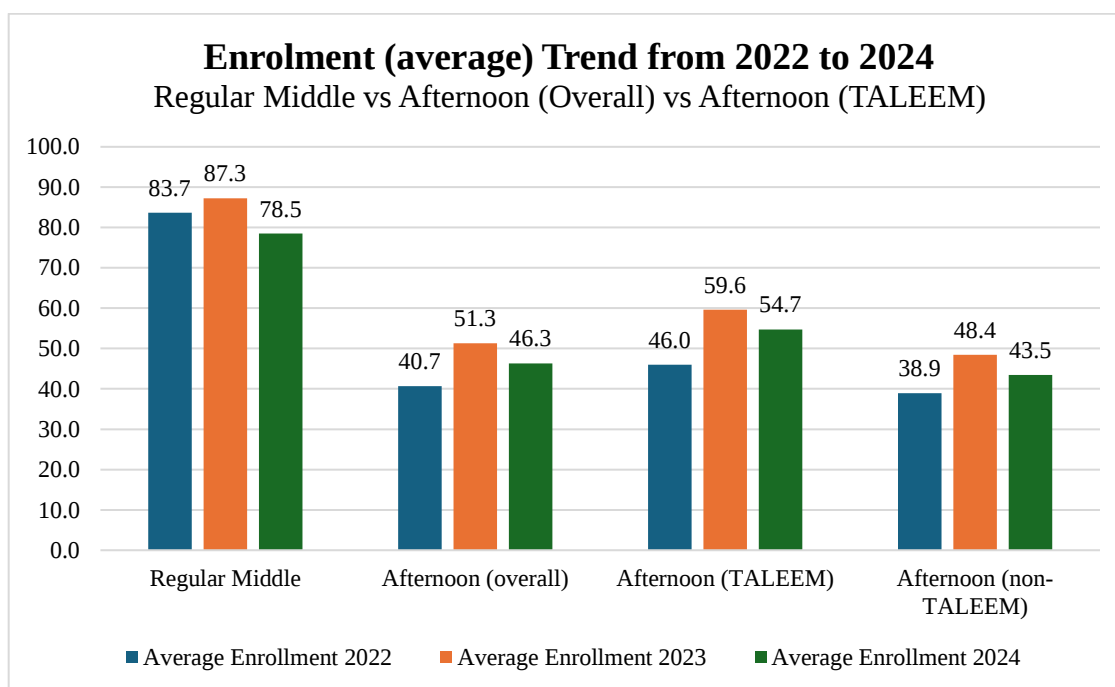
** Note: the negative growth is due the reduction in reported enrolment numbers across all schools because of a data cleaning exercise conducted by the School Education Department (SED) to remove fake/un-verified enrolments in the system.*

The afternoon schools enroll 273,985 students (ASC 2024). Majority of these students were previously either out of school or are at the risk of dropping out after primary (grade 5) had there been no afternoon school.

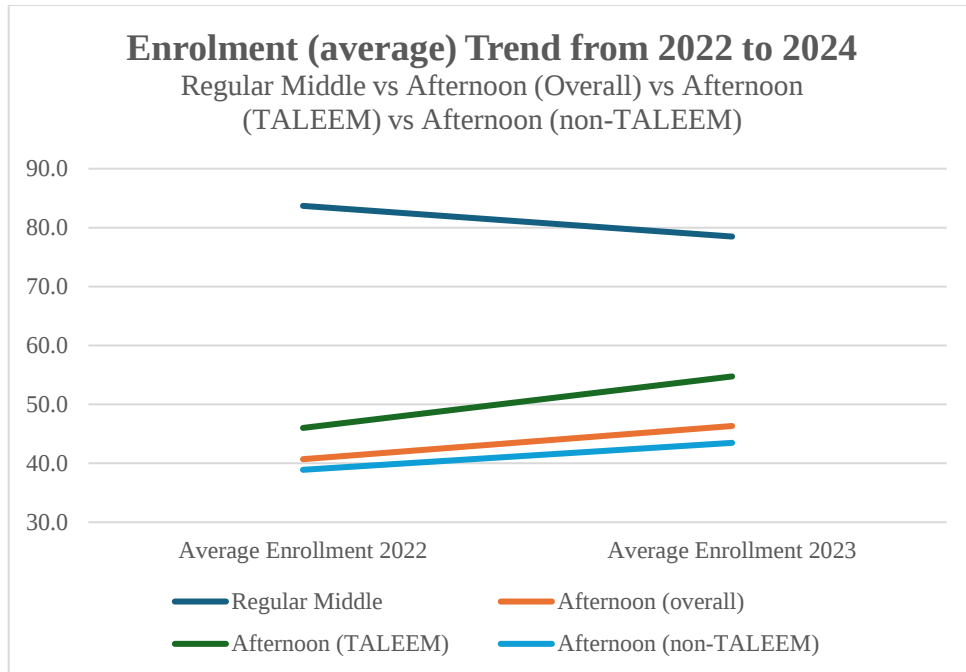
The overall trend analysis shows that

- There has been a positive change in enrolment between 2022 to 2023 for all type of schools with the largest positive change seen for the afternoon schools run under the TALEEM programme with 29.63% enrolment growth while the enrolment change in regular middle schools during the same period was 4.27%
- During 2023 to 2024, the enrolment numbers dropped for all types of schools but the minimum drop in enrolment was for TALEEM run afternoon schools

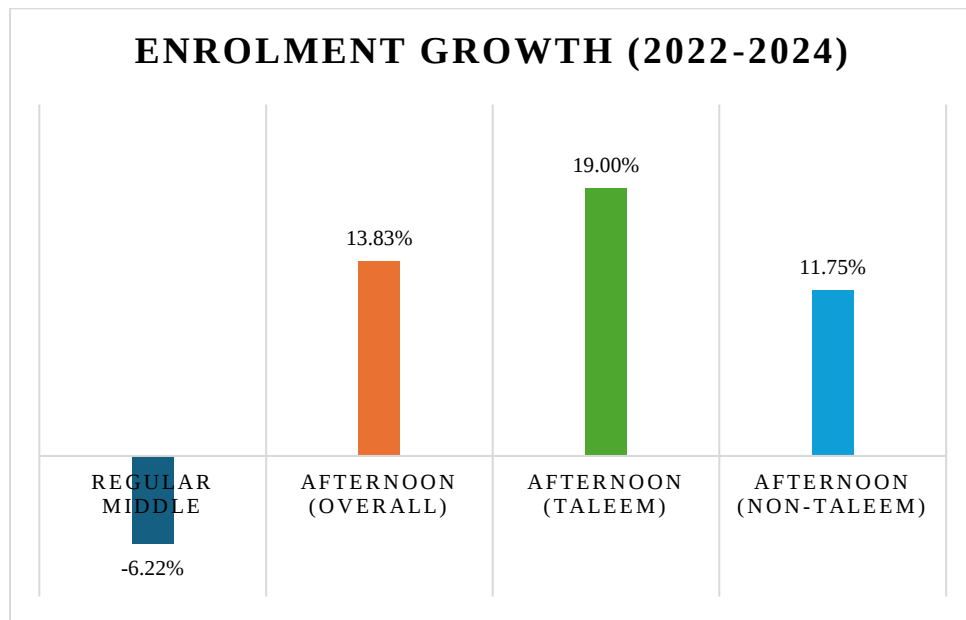
It is important to note that from 2022 to 2024, the net enrolment numbers for afternoon schools have increased, despite the drop due to data cleaning exercise, while for regular middle schools the net enrolment has also dropped.



Between 2022 and 2024, afternoon schools (both TALEEM and non-TALEEM) saw an overall increase in net enrolment, even after accounting for reductions due to data cleaning. In contrast, regular middle schools experienced a decline in net enrolment during the same period.



The graph below shows the net change in enrolment for the four categories of schools during the period of three years from 2022 to 2024:



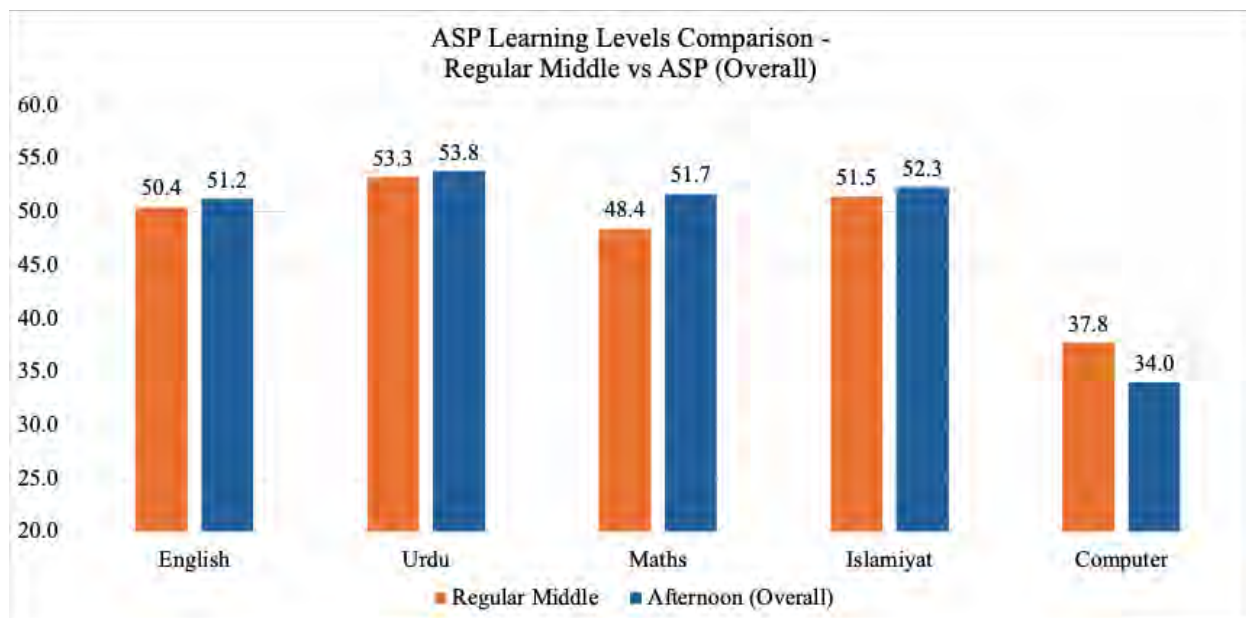
3.3 Learning Outcomes - Overall

The analysis for learning outcomes comparison is done for following subjects:

- English,

- Urdu,
- Maths,
- Islamiyat, and
- Computer

The results show that the afternoon schools outperform regular middle schools in all subjects, except for Computer.



- For English, average scores of students on the SBA results is 50.4 percent compared with 51.2 percent for afternoon schools,
- For Urdu average scores in regular middle are 53.3 percent compared to 53.8 percent for afternoon schools,
- For Maths the scores are 48.4 in regular middle and 51.7 percent for students in afternoon schools,
- For Islamiyat the scores are 51.5 percent for students in middle schools compared to 52.3 percent in afternoon schools, while
- For computer, the scores of students enrolled in regular middle schools are higher compared with the students in afternoon schools with average values of 37.8 percent and 34.0 percent respectively.

The results for Computer being higher for regular middle schools are due to the availability of computer labs in regular middle schools which are not there in the afternoon schools as they run in the primary schools during afternoon hours without provision of computer labs.

Regression Results – Regular middle vs Afternoon (overall)

The regression analysis by subject shows that the differences in subjects English, Urdu and Islamiyat are statistically insignificant meaning thereby that the scores are statistically the same for regular middle and afternoon schools, while for subject Maths they are statistically significant and positive (in favor of afternoon schools) and negative and significant for Computer i.e., regular middle schools outperform afternoon schools in Computer.

The base category here i.e., where dummy=0 is the regular middle school, hence the sign of the coefficient represents difference for afternoon schools in comparison to the regular middle schools.

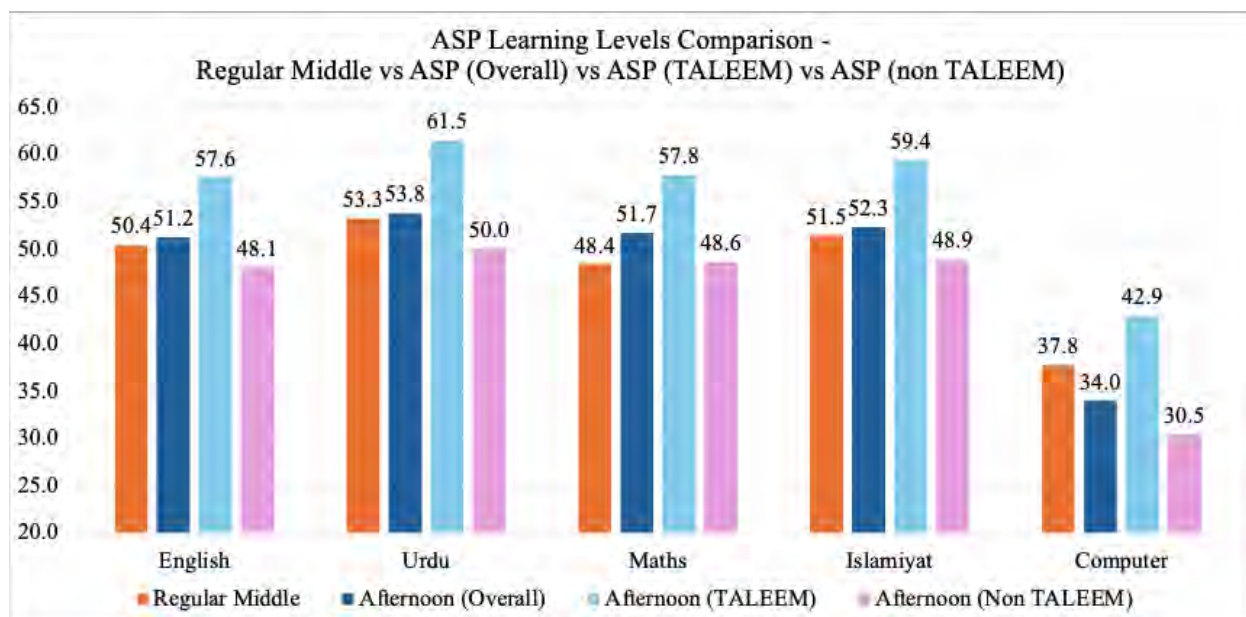
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
english	0.000173 (0.000150)				
urdu		0.000112 (0.000145)			
maths			0.000714*** (0.000150)		
islamiyat				0.000181 (0.000147)	
computer					-0.000592*** (0.000185)
Constant	0.193*** (0.00859)	0.196*** (0.00876)	0.167*** (0.00842)	0.192*** (0.00861)	0.255*** (0.00926)
Observations	9,683	9,683	9,683	9,611	4,578
R-squared	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.002

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

3.2 Learning Outcomes – Regular Middle vs. TALEEM run & non-TALEEM run Afternoon Schools

Overall, similar trends are observed when analysis is done including the subsets of overall afternoon schools with TALEEM run afternoon schools outperforming all other categories while regular middle schools outperforming the non-TALEEM run afternoon schools.



Regression Results – Regular Middle vs TALEEM run Afternoon Schools

As observed through the graph above, the regression results validate the findings that the TALEEM-run afternoon schools outperform regular middle schools in all subjects, including computer. The base category here i.e., where dummy=0 is the regular middle school, hence the sign of the coefficient represents difference for TALEEM run afternoon schools in comparison to the regular middle schools.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
english	0.000743*** (0.000111)				
urdu		0.000801*** (0.000108)			
maths			0.000992*** (0.000112)		
islamiyat				0.000783*** (0.000109)	
computer					0.000344*** (0.000132)
Constant	0.0389*** (0.00636)	0.0336*** (0.00648)	0.0280*** (0.00620)	0.0356*** (0.00636)	0.0668*** (0.00669)
Observations	8,373	8,373	8,373	8,308	3,815
R-squared	0.005	0.007	0.009	0.006	0.002

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Regression Results – Regular Middle vs non-TALEEM run Afternoon Schools

The base category here i.e., where dummy=0 is the non-TALEEM run afternoon schools, hence the sign of the coefficient represents difference for middle school in comparison to the non-TALEEM run afternoon schools.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
english	0.000384*** (0.000135)				
urdu		0.000502*** (0.000131)			
maths			-3.98e-05 (0.000136)		
islamiyat				0.000404*** (0.000133)	
computer					0.000947*** (0.000173)
Constant	0.836*** (0.00771)	0.829*** (0.00786)	0.857*** (0.00755)	0.834*** (0.00773)	0.787*** (0.00861)
Observations	9,040	9,040	9,040	8,977	4,273
R-squared	0.001	0.002	0.000	0.001	0.007

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

It is found that the regular middle schools outperform non-TALEEM run afternoon schools in all subjects, except for Maths coefficient for which is not statistically significant meaning thereby that there are no statistically significant differences between the two categories for Maths.

4. Conclusion

The Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP) in Punjab has demonstrated significant potential in addressing the province's educational crisis, particularly the high prevalence of out-of-school children (OOSC) at the middle level. With 26.8% of school-aged children out of school—rising to 31.5% in rural areas and 27.8% among girls—the ASP's innovative use of existing primary school infrastructure during afternoon hours has provided a cost-effective and scalable solution. The program's enrolment trends reveal notable success: over 270,000 students, who were either out of school or at risk of dropping out after primary education, are now enrolled in afternoon schools. Despite a system-wide enrolment decline in 2024 due to data-cleaning efforts to remove unverified entries, ASP schools showed resilient growth, particularly TALEEM-run institutions, which achieved a 29.63% enrolment increase between 2022 and 2023. This contrasts with the stagnant or declining enrolment in regular middle schools, underscoring ASP's role in expanding access.

Learning outcomes analysis presents a nuanced picture. While afternoon schools overall perform comparably to regular middle schools in core subjects like English, Urdu, and Islamiyat, they lag in computer science due to the absence of dedicated labs. However, disaggregating the data reveals critical insights: TALEEM-run afternoon schools outperform regular middle schools across all subjects, including computer science, with statistically significant results. This success is attributed to structured support mechanisms—timely salary disbursements, teacher training, and rigorous monitoring—that ensure operational stability and quality. In contrast, non-TALEEM-run schools, plagued by salary delays and inadequate training, underperform regular middle schools, highlighting the importance of institutional support for programme efficacy.

5. Policy Recommendations

To ensure the sustainability and scalability of Punjab's Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP), the following recommendations are proposed. The recommendations are related to the Operating Environment, Financial Environment, and Policy Environment of the ASP. These are informed by the study's findings on enrollment trends, learning outcomes, and global best practices.

5.1 Operating Environment

The operating environment relates to the day-to-day functioning and implementation of the Afternoon Schools Programme (ASP). It includes teacher capacity-building, infrastructure development and provision of facilities, monitoring mechanisms, and data-driven decision-making. Recommendations under this category aim to improve the operational efficiency and quality of ASP schools.

- 1. Strengthen Support Mechanisms for ASP Schools** - Establish a dedicated ASP Support Unit within the School Education Department (SED) or Punjab Education, Curriculum, Training and Assessment Authority (PECTAA) to provide technical assistance, teacher training, and qualitative monitoring.
- 2. Integrate Digital Literacy** - Promote digital literacy by equipping ASP schools with basic computer labs and training teachers to deliver ICT education. Partner with NGOs, private sector stakeholders or government school alumni to fund infrastructure and in-kind contributions.
- 3. Enhance Teacher Capacity** - Mandate annual pedagogical training for all ASP teachers, focusing on middle-grade curriculum delivery, classroom management, and gender-sensitive teaching practices.
- 4. Improve Monitoring and Accountability** - Expand the role of PMIU's Monitoring & Evaluation Assistants (MEAs) to conduct monthly quality audits of ASP schools, focusing on attendance, teacher performance, and facility adequacy.
- 5. Strengthen Data-Driven Decision-Making** - Institutionalize annual learning outcome assessments for ASP schools through PECTAA and analyse the results for informed decision making and support in areas where needed.
- 6. Create a Reporting Dashboard** - Use SIS data to create a real-time dashboard tracking enrollment, teacher attendance, and facility gaps across ASP schools.

5.2 Financial Environment

The financial environment pertains to the funding and resource allocation mechanisms that support ASP, and the robustness of financial flows. It includes salary disbursements, budget planning and execution. Recommendations under this category focus on ensuring prevention of fund diversion and timely payments to teachers and staff.

7. **Ring-Fence ASP Budget in ADP** - Allocate a dedicated, ring-fenced budget for the Afternoon Schools Programme within Punjab's Annual Development Programme (ADP) to prevent fund diversion and ensure financial sustainability. This will safeguard ASP operations and signal long-term commitment from the government.
8. **Ensure Timely Salary Disbursements** - Explore implementing direct IBAN-based salary transfers for all ASP teachers and staff to eliminate payment delays and improve transparency. Timely disbursements will enhance trust, reduce attrition, and maintain staff motivation.
9. **Review and Revise ASP Staff Remuneration** - Explore revision of ASP staff remuneration, which has remained unchanged since 2021 despite rising inflation. A periodic review mechanism should be introduced to ensure that compensation remains fair, competitive, and aligned with the cost of living, thereby supporting retention and motivation of ASP staff.

5.3 Policy Environment

The policy environment refers to the broader regulatory and strategic framework within which ASP operates. It includes school eligibility and selection criteria, and strategic decisions that guide how ASP is designed and expanded. Recommendations in this category aim to refine eligibility criteria for ASP schools for ensuring sustainable expansion and maximized impact.

10. **Conduct Demand Assessments Before Expansion** - Before expanding the Afternoon Schools Programme to new areas, local demand assessments should be carried out through DEAs and School Councils to ensure sufficient student interest and avoid attrition due to low enrollment.
11. **Review ASP School Selection Criteria** - Revise the current ASP eligibility criteria to prioritise schools located in high out-of-school children (OOSC) clusters (e.g., districts with >30% OOSC rates).

Annexures

Selection Criteria and Guidelines for Engaging Teachers

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR UP-GRADATION (Primary to Elementary Level)

- i) In primary schools (falling within the Municipal limits), enrollment of grades 4th & 5th should be 20 for boys and 15 for girls in each class, whereas, in primary schools (falling outside the Municipal limits), cumulative enrollment of grades 4th & 5th be 20 for boys and 15 for girls.
- ii) Distance from nearest Elementary Schools be 1-Km for Boys and Girls.

Chief Executive Officer (District Education Authority) will identify and add recommendation for up-gradation of schools under IASP on the basis of recommendations of AEOs, Dy. DEOs and DEOs. School Education Department will approve and issue notification through School Information System (SIS) with QR coded orders.

Number of Teachers to be hired for Insaf Afternoon School
Program
(IASP)

Sr.	Head Teacher	No. of Teachers	Enrollment				Remarks
			6 th Grade	7 th Grade	8 th Grade	Overall Students	
i).	1	1	Equal to or more than 10	Any number	Any number	20	To run new IASP, minimum 10 children must be enrolled in class 6 initially.
ii).	1	2	Equal to or more than 10	Any number	Any number	More than 20.	2 nd teacher may be hired.
iii).	1	3	Equal to or more than 20	Any number	Any number	Up to 60 students	3 rd teacher may be hired.
iv).	1	4	Equal to or more than 20	Any number	Any number	More than 60	4 th teacher may be hired.

Note:-

1. If enrolment is less than 10, then no honorarium will be paid.
2. Initially one supporting staff will be hired.
3. When more than 60 students, 2nd supporting staff can be hired.


 Section Officer
 Government of the Punjab
 School Education Deptt