

Evaluation of Infant Language Link

Dear parent/carers,

Your child's school is participating in a study evaluating the Infant Language Link programme, delivered by Speech Link Multimedia Limited, funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and evaluated by Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). This project will focus on pupils in Y1 during the 2023-24 school year.

About Infant Language Link

Infant Language Link is a package that enables schools to identify and support children who have mild to moderate language needs. Teachers/TAs receive online training on how to support pupils with language development. Initial language ability screening is conducted at the start of the programme with all pupils. This takes 15-20 minutes per child. Results are used to help teachers determine whether a child needs additional support with language.

All pupils in schools using Infant Language Link are taught by their usual teachers, who receive specialist training from the delivery team. Pupils identified for further support also do small group activities with Teaching Assistants to improve their language abilities.

About the evaluation

As part of this evaluation, half of the schools participating in the study will be randomly selected to use the Infant Language Link intervention in 2023-24. The other half (called the control group) will continue with 'business as usual', teaching their pupils as they normally would. This is so that the progress of pupils receiving the programme can be compared to those who are not. It is expected that the evaluation report will be published in early 2025.

To understand how well Infant Language Link improves pupil language development, SHU will need to collect certain data from schools. Specifically, schools will share pupil details (Unique Pupil Number, date of birth, full name) for one class in the 2023/24 Y1 cohort with SHU via secure transfer in June/July 2023. This data is needed to know which pupils are taking part in the project. SHU will also receive data from Speech Link Multimedia Ltd about pupils in intervention schools and how they progress during the study period.

All participating pupils in all schools (intervention and control) will take a language assessment in September/October 2023 and again in June/July 2024. Specifically, this will comprise the Pearson Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals and the Renfrew Action Picture Test, which focus on expressive and receptive language (speaking and understanding) and take no more than 30 minutes per pupil. These assessments are separate from the initial language screening conducted as part of the Infant Language Link intervention. A member of school staff will be present and will explain to the pupil that they can stop immediately if they are uncomfortable in any way. Individual results will not be shared with the school or parents. Parents who do not want their child to take part can withdraw them from the evaluation by returning the slip at the end of this letter to their school.

Data on pupil characteristics (Free School Meals and English as an Additional Language status) and prior attainment will also be obtained from National Pupil Database to help us understand how well Infant Language Link works for these pupils. For further details please see the project privacy notice: https://www.shu.ac.uk/-/media/home/research/sioe-rke/privacy-notices/ill_privacy_notice-v3.docx

Data protection

All personal data will be kept confidential and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (Article 6 (1e) and Article 9 (j)). SHU will write a report at the end of the evaluation, to be published by EEF. No individual pupils, teachers or schools will be mentioned in the report. All data will be stored securely on SHU and Speech Link's systems.

Please see the SHU Privacy Notice for details about how your child's data will be treated: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notice/privacy-notice-for-research>

This EEF project is part of a wider DfE funded programme called the 'Accelerator Fund' which aims to increase access to evidence-informed programmes. At the end of the project, data will be submitted to the EEF Data Archive. At this point, EEF and DfE will be data controllers and contractors appointed to manage the Data Archive will be data processors. The evaluation data will also be linked with information about the students from the National Pupil Database (NPD), Department for Education, the EEF's archive manager and, in an anonymised form, with the Office for National Statistics, the UK Data Archive, and potentially other approved researchers. Speech Link will conduct their own analysis of the trial data once the evaluation is completed and will use an external processor for this purpose.

If you would like more information about this project, you can contact the research team at SHU using the email address below or visit the websites for EEF or Infant Language Link.

SHU Email: LanguageLink@shu.ac.uk

EEF Website: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>

Speech Link Multimedia Ltd: <https://speechandlanguage.info>

If you do not want your child's school to share your child's data with SHU for the purpose of this evaluation, please complete the slip at the bottom of the page and return it to the school within two weeks. Please note that if you wish to opt your child out of the evaluation, they can still take part in the Infant Language Link lessons, but not the evaluation.

If you are happy with everything in this letter you do not need to do anything.

Dr Martin Culliney

Senior Research Fellow
Sheffield Hallam University

Infant Language Link Evaluation OPT-OUT SLIP

I do **not** want my child to take part in the evaluation of the Infant Language Link programme, including all the research activities described above:

Your child's name.....

Your full name.....

Your signature.....

Date.....