



## CONCEPT CAT PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

**Concept Cat** is a new project that will be coming into your child's nursery. **Concept Cat** involves teaching children important words through songs, stories and play. The teaching is for all children and will be done by your child's usual teacher. We think that Concept Cat helps children learn, but we want to find out if it really does. To know we need to measure children's knowledge of words and maths. We are planning for a trained professional to come into nursery and talk to children in September 2023 and again in June/July 2024.

**We gained full support from your child's nursery to deliver and evaluate Concept Cat, but if you don't want us to talk to your child to find out how they are learning words, you need to tell us. You can do this by filling in the 'I don't want my child to take part' form on page 6 or by emailing us on [conceptcatevaluation@randeurope.org](mailto:conceptcatevaluation@randeurope.org).**

The full details of the **Concept Cat** project and its evaluation are below.

### What is Concept Cat?

Concept Cat has been developed by Stephen Parsons and Anna Branagan, two Speech and Language Therapists, who are working with Better Communication CIC. Concept Cat is a story and play-based approach for teaching words that we call 'concepts'. Concepts are really important words such as 'first, whole and least' which can be really tricky to learn. Concept Cat is a whole-class approach and so all children will be able to get involved. Each week a short story will be acted out and then the children will play some extra games and sing a song. Families can get involved when teachers send home the words and simple activities. Children will be taught early verbal concepts such as 'first', 'wide', 'empty' and 'through' in a structured and engaging manner that will involve storytelling and play. Such concepts have been selected as they are considered core to the curriculum of maths and science. The ultimate aim is to improve maths and science attainment at Key Stage 1. Children will be taught one word per week. This is because we want to allow opportunity for deep understanding to develop.

## **The evaluation**

We want to find out if Concept Cat helps children learn words faster and if their numeracy skills develop so we will be running an evaluation of Concept Cat as it is delivered. The evaluation is being funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), an organisation that funds research into education, and the Department for Education (DfE). RAND Europe and the University of York with support from Elklan will be working together evaluate Concept Cat.

Settings that are selected to participate in the evaluation will be randomly assigned to either receive Concept Cat in the academic year 2023/2024 (the intervention group) or to continue practice as usual (the control group). There will be an equal chance of being allocated to each group, with half the settings in the intervention group and half in the control group.

The success of the programme will be measured using well-established language and numeracy assessments with selected children in the setting. In order to understand the impact of this approach, trained professionals from Elklan will visit nurseries at the start of the academic year and work with children one to one in September and October 2023 and then again in June/July 2024. They will talk to the children and look at some pictures for about 20-25 minutes each.

We are also keen to hear from parents and/or guardians so York University will also be asking you to participate in a short survey. They will do this twice: once at the start and once again at the end of the school year. The purpose of the survey will be to understand your own experience of having your child participate in the programme, along with the types of learning activities that you and your child typically engage with at home (e.g., the simple activities that the teachers send home in order for the children to practise the new words).

## **What will taking part in the study involve?**

### **Participation is voluntary**

**It is up to you if you want your child involved but you have to tell us if you don't want your child to take part.**

If you choose not to include your child in the evaluation, this will have no impact on the usual care your child receives in their nursery, or on whether the nursery uses the Concept Cat programme or not. If you change your mind at any point during the study, you will be able to withdraw your child's participation without having to say why.

### **Anonymity and confidentiality**

**We won't tell other people about anything specific about your child.**

We assure you that all information relating to you and your child will be treated in the strictest confidence and processed in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Any sharing of the research findings (e.g. through reports, academic publications

and presentations) will be in an anonymous format. **We will not mention your child's nursery or your child's name in any report or publication coming from the research.**

## **Storing and using your data**

### **How we will look after the information we have about your child.**

We will also ask your child's nursery to share some additional details about your child to help with our analysis.

All information about the nursery and your child will be stored securely by code number on a password protected computer. Any identifiable information will be stored separately from the data and will be destroyed at the end of the evaluation.

At the end of the evaluation your child's data will be shared with the Department for Education, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), FFT Education (EEF's data processor for the EEF data archive) in order to place it into the data into the National Pupil Database. This will allow your child's data to be used in a pseudonymised form (i.e. names are not shared) during subsequent research. We may also share anonymised data (i.e. data with no identifiable data that can be linked to your child) with other research teams.

To ensure that all processing is fair and lawful, the evaluation team have completed a Data Protection Impact Assessment and have sought and obtained ethical approval from an internal review board. Further details relating to GDPR, third parties, and confidentiality are provided in the Privacy Notice. Please read this information carefully. You will need to confirm that you have read and understood this information before proceeding.

Please note: If we gather information that raises concerns about your/your child's safety or the safety of others, or about other concerns as perceived by the researcher, the researcher may pass on this information to another person.

## **What do I need to do now?**

**If you are happy with all of this, you don't have to do anything.** If you are happy for your child to take the short assessments and for your child's nursery to share your child's data with us, as described above, then you do not need to do anything.

**If you aren't happy to get involved, then you need to tell us.**

If you do NOT want to share your child's data as described above, please complete the attached 'Parent/guardian: I don't want my child to take part' form and hand it to your teacher who will then let us know.

You are free to withdraw your child's information for use in this evaluation at any time between now and August 2024. You can do that by either writing to the setting (who will then contact the evaluation team) or emailing the evaluation team directly at:

[conceptcatevaluation@randeurope.org](mailto:conceptcatevaluation@randeurope.org).

Please note: Children whose parents have indicated that they wish to withdraw their child's data from the evaluation (i.e. the assessments) may still participate in the programme.

### **Questions or concerns**

**If you need to know anything else, please contact us.**

If you have any questions about this participant information sheet or concerns about how your child's data is being processed, please feel free to contact the lead researcher, Elena Rosa Brown at [conceptcatevaluation@randeurope.org](mailto:conceptcatevaluation@randeurope.org). If you still have questions about the way your child's data will be processed, please contact our Data Protection Officer at [REdpo@randeurope.org](mailto:REdpo@randeurope.org).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.



## CONCEPT CAT

**PARENT/GUARDIAN: I don't want my child to take part**

**Only fill this form in if you do not want your child to take part in the assessments**

**If you are happy for your child to take part in the evaluation (i.e. the assessments) and for your setting to share your child's data with us, as described in the information sheet, then you do not need to complete this form.**

If you do **NOT** want your child to participate in the evaluation, please complete and return this form to your child's setting. Your child may still participate in the programme, even if you indicate that you wish to withdraw your child's data from the evaluation.

**If you do not return a completed form, we will assume you are happy for your setting to share information for use in this evaluation and for your child to participate in the research.**

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I do **NOT** want my child to participate in the research or for my child's data to be shared for the evaluation of the Concept Cat programme.

Child's Name (Please print clearly).....

Parent/Carer Name (Please print clearly).....

Signature ..... Date.....

Setting Name .....

Name of setting staff member processing the withdrawal .....

Hand in to nursery