

Does providing 5-6 year olds with daily 15 minute music sessions impact on their reading attainment?

Submission date 17/07/2018	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 24/07/2018	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 07/06/2023	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

First Thing Music is a programme that aims to improve children's reading and social skills by providing them with daily music sessions. Research has shown that a difficulty in processing rhythm can have a negative impact on children's reading. The trial aims to test whether the First Thing Music programme can improve pupil's reading attainment over the course of one school year for Year 1 pupils, along with whether it impacts their social skills.

Who can participate?

Children in Year 1 across approximately 120 state-funded primary schools in Tees Valley and Sheffield

What does the study involve?

Classes within schools are randomly allocated to either the intervention or the control group. The intervention group will receive the First Thing Music Intervention, whereas the control group will continue with "business as usual".

The First Thing Music Intervention involves daily 15 minute music sessions over 3 terms, which will involve singing games and movement activities. Class teachers will deliver the intervention after receiving training from a team of music practitioners. As the children progress, more advanced skills will be introduced, such as written notation, subdivisions of beats, patterns of longer/shorter sounds and awareness of melody and pitch.

The control group will not receive any intervention and continue as usual.

Children will be assessed on their reading and social skills at the end of the study.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

The possible benefit to participants is that approaches such as the First Thing Music programme may improve children's attainment outcomes, along with communication and language. There are no known risks to participants taking part in this study.

Where is the study run from?

The study is run by the Tees Valley Music Service and the evaluation is led by the Behavioural

Insights team in collaboration with UCL Institute of Education.
The schools participating in the study are based in the Tees Valley and Sheffield.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
May 2017 to December 2019

Who is funding the study?
1. Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (UK)
2. The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Kimberly Bohling (Research Advisor, The Behavioural Insights Team)
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Contact information

Type(s)
Public

Contact name
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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
N/A

Study information

Scientific Title
Using the First Thing Music programme to improve pupil attainment: A randomised trial in schools

Acronym
FTM

Study objectives
First Thing Music intervention increases reading attainment of 5 and 6 year olds

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Study design

Interventional cluster randomised controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Academic attainment

Interventions

Classes within participating schools will be stratified by school and a random number will be generated for each class within each school. In the case of a two-form school, the class with the highest random number in the school will be assigned to the treatment group and the other class to the control group. In the case of schools with more than two forms, BIT will do as per step 3 for schools with an even number of forms (e.g. four-forms). For schools with an odd number of forms (e.g. three forms), the randomisation will be done as follows. Half the schools will randomly be chosen to have one intervention and two control classes and the other half will have two intervention and one control class. If one-form entry schools are recruited, they will be grouped into a single stratum for the purposes of randomisation.

The intervention group will receive the First Thing Music Intervention, comprised of daily 15-minute music sessions for Year 1 pupils (5-6 year olds) over the course of three terms. The children will take part in singing games and movement activities, focusing mainly on steady beat, rhythm and pitch. The intervention will be delivered by class teachers who will receive training and mentoring from a team of music practitioners recruited by specialists from the British Kodály Academy. The daily music sessions will follow a Kodály-based approach, introducing the children to musical concepts through experiences such as listening, singing and movement. These concepts will be constantly reviewed, reinforced and extended through games, songs and exercises. More advanced skills such as written notation, subdivisions of beats, patterns of longer /shorter sounds and awareness of melodic shape by pitch discrimination, will be introduced gradually according to the progress of the children.

The control group will not receive any intervention.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

The following will be assessed at the end of the intervention period - the end of the 2019 school year:

1. Reading ability (phonics, literal comprehension and reading for meaning) assessed using the Progress in Reading Assessment (PIRA)
2. Oral narrative skills (information content, sentence length, grammatical usage and independence), assessed using the Renfrew Bus Story test

To account for baseline variation in attainment, the child's Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) will be used.

Key secondary outcome(s)

The following will be assessed at the end of the intervention period - the end of the 2019 school year:

1. Social skills, assessed using the Social Skills scale of the Social Skills Improvement System (SSiS). This is assessed across the following subscales:

- 1.1. Communication
- 1.2. Cooperation
- 1.3. Assertion
- 1.4. Responsibility
- 1.5. Responsibility
- 1.6. Empathy
- 1.7. Engagement
- 1.8. Self-control

2. Self-perception of ability to generate and use ideas in their school work, assessed using an adapted version of the ideation sub-measure of the writing self-efficacy measure, with significant simplification to make it age-group appropriate

To account for baseline variation in attainment, the child's Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) will be used.

Completion date

31/12/2019

Eligibility**Key inclusion criteria**

1. Located in North East England
2. Discussed participation with First Thing Music and signed an MoU detailing the conditions of participation (opt-out process, pupil data provision and endline assessment, participation in IPE activities, etc.).

If there is significant interest from localised areas not in the North East (e.g. Sheffield), music practitioners may be recruited to these areas as well. This will typically require at least 10 schools in a localised area to be recruited in the study.

Strong preference will also be given to two-form entry schools. If the project team are unable to recruit the required number of two-form schools, other schools (e.g. single and three-form entry) will be considered after discussions with the evaluation team and the EEF.

Schools with an average or above average share (14.1%) of Free School Meal (FSM) children will receive priority in recruitment.

As this trial will be randomised at the class-level, there are no pupil-level eligibility requirements.

Participant type(s)

Other

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

3004

Key exclusion criteria

N/A

Date of first enrolment

01/01/2018

Date of final enrolment

29/06/2018

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre**Tees Valley Music Service**

Bishopton Road West

Stockton-on-Tees

TS19 0HQ

Stockton-on-Tees

United Kingdom

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Study participating centre**Behavioural Insights Team**

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Study participating centre**UCL Institute of Education**

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Sponsor information

Organisation

The Behavioural Insights Team

ROR

<https://ror.org/03mk5b468>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Not defined

Funder Name

Education Endowment Foundation

Alternative Name(s)

EducEndowFoundn, Education Endowment Foundation | London, EEF

Funding Body Type

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location

United Kingdom

Funder Name

Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

Participant level data is quite sensitive, as it contains personal and academic information that could be used to identify trial participants. As such, this data will not be made publicly available.

However, participant level data will be transferred and stored with the Education Endowment Foundation (the project funder) and (in an anonymised form) the UK Data Archive.

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Funder report results		07/09/2021	13/09/2021	No	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes