Evaluation of the best practice in setting year 7 and 8 students within English and mathematics

Submission date
04/09/2015

Registration date
13/10/2015

Last Edited
14/09/2018

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Overall study status
Completed

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered

[_] Protocol

[_] Statistical analysis plan

[X] Results

[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
In the UK, students have long been divided into groups based on their ability in schools, particularly for academic subjects such as English and Math. This is based on the principle that children do not all learn the same way or at the same pace. This practice is often debated by teachers, as although it can be an efficient way to organize students, there are several problems with this arrangement. The first problem is that ability grouping tends to encourage segregation of students, for instance students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often placed in lower sets. The second problem is that students in lower sets tend to make less progress than those in higher sets, ever increasing the gap between their achievement levels, making it more difficult to "move up" a set. The aim of this study is to explore the long-term consequences for pupils in low sets, to find out whether the set the pupil is placed in has an impact on their performance in English and mathematics.

Who can participate?
Secondary schools which currently (or are willing to) divide children into sets for English and Math in year 7 and 8.

What does the study involve?
Included schools are randomly allocated into two groups. English and Math teachers at the schools included in the first group (intervention group) attend workshops which aim to improve teaching skills, and improve the curriculum for different sets in English and mathematics. Pupils are then assigned into one of four sets based on ability according to specific instructions for setting. Schools allocated to the second group (control group) continue with their usual teaching practices.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There are no direct benefits of participating, however students may benefit in the long run as this research will increase knowledge on education policies in England. There are no foreseeable risks of participating.

Where is the study run from?
National Foundation for Educational Research, Slough (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
March 2015 to November 2017

Who is funding the study?
Education Endowment Foundation (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Ben Styles
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Study website

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/evaluation-of-best-practice-in-grouping-students.cfm

Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

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Additional identifiers

EudraCT/CTIS number

IRAS number

ClinicalTrials.gov number

Secondary identifying numbers

N/A

Study information

Scientific Title

Randomised controlled trial of best practice in setting year 7 and 8 students within English and mathematics

Study objectives

This study aims to explore poor outcomes for pupils in low sets and streams which are related to poor associated setting practice.

The primary research questions are:
1. What is the impact of best practice in setting on pupils' attainment in mathematics?
2. What is the impact of best practice in setting on pupils' attainment in English?

The secondary research questions are:
1. What is the impact of best practice in setting on pupils' self-confidence in mathematics?
2. What is the impact of best practice in setting on pupils' self-confidence in English?

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
National Foundation for Educational Research Code of Practice Committee, 05/03/2015

Study design
Multi-centre cluster randomised controlled trial

Primary study design
Interventional

Secondary study design
Cluster randomised trial

Study setting(s)
School

Study type(s)
Quality of life

Participant information sheet
http://www.nfer.ac.uk/schools/taking-part-in-our-research/eefk---setting-initiative.cfm

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
This study aims to explore poor outcomes for pupils in low sets and streams which are related to poor associated setting practice.

Interventions
120 Secondary schools will be randomly allocated into the intervention group or the control group. For all schools, key stage 2 results will be used as baseline test data and GL assessment's English and mathematics tests will be used as follow-up tests at the end of year 8, where a random sample of 60 pupils will be selected from each school.

Intervention group: Heads of Maths and English departments along with teachers delivering Maths and English to the Year 7 cohort in intervention schools will attend an initial workshop in July 2015. This will be focused on the KS3 leadership developing a department-wide approach to addressing the factors identified: Increasing fluidity, raising teacher expectations and pedagogy,

improving access to the whole curriculum and higher status qualifications, improving pupil engagement and attitudes and tackling the self-fulfilling prophecy. There will be four workshops provided across the two-year intervention.

Control group: Schools from this group will continue with their student grouping practices as usual. Once they have completed the year 8 tests at the end of the trial, they will receive £1,000.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome measure
Pupil attainment in English and maths will be measured using the New Progress in English (NPiE) and New Progress in Mathematics (NPiM) tests developed by GL assessment at the end of year 8 in summer 2017. Key stage 2 test results from academic year 2014-15 will be used to measure pupil attainment at baseline.

Secondary outcome measures
Pupils' self confidence in English and mathematics will be measured using a pupil survey at the start of year 7 in September 2015 and at the end of year 8 in summer 2017.

Overall study start date
12/03/2015

Completion date
30/11/2017

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Schools that currently divide children into sets for English and/or maths in years 7 and 8
2. Schools willing to change practices to divide children into sets for English and/or maths in years 7 and 8

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Age group
Child

Sex
Both

Target number of participants
120 Secondary schools. The grouping practices will be applied to Year 7 classes with an average cohort size of 180 pupils per school making it a total of 21,600 pupils involved in the study.

Key exclusion criteria
Schools who organise and teach year 7 pupils in mixed-attainment groups.

Date of first enrolment

26/03/2015

Date of final enrolment
12/06/2015

Locations

Countries of recruitment
England

United Kingdom

Study participating centre
National Foundation for Educational Research
The Mere
Upton Park
Slough
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SL1 2DQ

Sponsor information

Organisation
Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

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Sponsor type
Government

Website
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/

ROR
https://ror.org/03bhd6288

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

Results and Publications

Publication and dissemination plan
Education Endowment Foundation will publish a report on the results of the study.

Intention to publish date
30/11/2017

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Funder report results	results			No	No