

Time to act: evaluating the impact of Royal Shakespeare Company Pedagogy on literacy and academic self-concept in primary schools

Submission date 30/11/2022	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 14/12/2022	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 14/07/2025	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

This study will evaluate the effectiveness of the Royal Shakespeare Company Pedagogy (RSC-P) programme with Year 5 primary school pupils in England. The programme will be delivered in areas of structural disadvantage by teachers trained in specialist rehearsal room techniques. Case study evidence from previous studies commissioned by the RSC suggests that the programme improved children's language skills and their perceptions of their learning capabilities. The current study will seek more robust evidence, from a larger sample, for the impact of the programme in these areas.

Who can participate?

Children in Year 5 classes (aged between 9 and 10 years old) in English primary schools

What does the study involve?

Following the recruitment of schools in England with percentage eligibility for free schools meals (FSM) of 20.8 or above, participating pupils in Year 5 classes will be subject to a pretest comprising three measures:

1. LanguageScreen, an app-based assessment of three core language skills: expressive vocabulary, sentence repetition, and listening comprehension (https://oxedandassessment.com/language_screen).
2. ReadingScreen, an app-based assessment of two core reading skills: word and nonword decoding (<https://oxedandassessment.com/readingscreen/>).
3. Myself As a Learner (MALS), a paper questionnaire measuring students' general perceptions of their learning capabilities relating to school-related activities.

These tests will provide baseline data for students' literacy levels and academic self-concept. Participating children will be randomly allocated to an intervention group or a waiting list control group. The Royal Shakespeare Company Pedagogy (RSC-P) intervention programme will be delivered in classrooms by specially trained teachers. Pupils in each participating class within the intervention group will receive the programme for 20 hours between January and July 2023. Teachers attached to the waiting control group will undertake training in RSC-P in December 2023, with the intervention delivered thereafter. In July 2023, when the intervention group have

completed the 20-hour programme, all children in every participating class will be assessed again using the same measures, with the addition of a prompted writing exercise assessing students' language use, sentence construction and narrative technique. The literacy levels and academic self-concept of children in the intervention group will be compared to those in the waiting list control group to assess how much the children who received the intervention have improved as a result.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Children taking part in the intervention will benefit from classroom activities delivered by specially trained teachers. There are no anticipated risks of participation.

Where is the study run from?

The Royal Shakespeare Company (UK). The RSC was awarded Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status from UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) in 2021.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

May 2022 to September 2023

Who is funding the study?

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Dr Lynsey McCulloch, lynsey.mcculloch@rsc.org.uk (UK)

Contact information

Type(s)

Principal investigator

Contact name

Dr Lynsey McCulloch

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0264-032X>

Contact details

Royal Shakespeare Company
Waterside
Stratford-upon-Avon
United Kingdom
CV37 6BB
+44 (0)7595 456098
lynsey.mcculloch@rsc.org.uk

Type(s)

Public

Contact name

Dr Lynsey McCulloch

Contact details

Royal Shakespeare Company
Waterside
Stratford-upon-Avon
United Kingdom
CV37 6BB
+44 (0)7595 456098
lynsey.mcculloch@rsc.org.uk

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

Dr Lynsey McCulloch

Contact details

Royal Shakespeare Company
Waterside
Stratford-upon-Avon
United Kingdom
CV37 6BB
+44 (0)7595 456098
lynsey.mcculloch@rsc.org.uk

Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)

Nil known

Protocol serial number

RSC 2022-01

Study information

Scientific Title

The impact of Royal Shakespeare Company Pedagogy (RSC-P) on literacy and academic self-concept in primary schools: a cluster randomised controlled trial

Acronym

RSC-P

Study objectives

The researchers expect the RSC-P intervention to produce improvements in children's language skills and academic self-concept

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 24/11/2022, RSC Research Ethics Review Panel (Waterside, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6BB, UK; 07747 876 788; jacqui.ohanlon@rsc.org.uk), ref: RSC 2022-01

Study design

Multicentre interventional cluster randomized controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Improvement of literacy and academic self-concept in children within areas of structural disadvantage

Interventions

Year 5 classes have been recruited from schools in England with a percentage eligibility for free schools meals (FSM) of 20.8 or above.

Pretest: Every child in all participating Year 5 classrooms will be assessed using the following measures:

- LanguageScreen app (https://oxedandassessment.com/language_screen). This test assesses three core language skills: expressive vocabulary, sentence repetition, and listening comprehension. The testing will be conducted by school staff using tablets. The app provides the scoring of responses.
- ReadingScreen app (<https://oxedandassessment.com/readingscreen/>). This test assesses two core reading skills: word and nonword decoding. The testing will be conducted by school staff using tablets. The app provides the scoring of responses.
- Myself As a Learner (MALS) scale. This scale assesses students' general perceptions of their learning capabilities relating to school related activities. The testing will be conducted by school staff using paper questionnaires and scored by the research team.

Randomisation: This is a cluster randomised controlled trial. Schools differ in levels of deprivation (%FSM) and in number of participating classes. %FSM will be recoded into a binary variable (Hi or Lo FSM) and school size recoded into a binary variable (one class or more than one class). Stratified randomisation using these two variables will be undertaken in Stata 17.0 using the randtreat module. Classes will be randomised to either the intervention or waiting list control group. School staff will not be blind to allocation.

Intervention: The RSC-P intervention programme will be delivered in classrooms by specially trained teachers. Pupils in each participating class within the intervention group will receive the programme for 20 hours between January and July 2023. The waiting control group will receive no treatment in this period. Teachers attached to the waiting control group will undertake training in RSC-P in December 2023, with the intervention delivered thereafter.

Posttest: The posttest will repeat measures used in the pretest, with the addition of a writing exercise assessing skill levels in lexis (lexical variety and lexical density), syntax (syntactical complexity and sentence length), semantics (semantic profile) and narrative (narrative components). The testing will be conducted by school staff and scored by the research team.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

A latent variable of academic self-concept measured using the Myself As a Learner (MALS) scale at the pretest (baseline) in January 2023 and at the posttest (on completion of the 20-hour intervention in July 2023)

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. A latent language variable measured using the three LanguageScreen subtests (Expressive Vocabulary, Listening Comprehension and Sentence Repetition), at the pretest (baseline) in January 2023 and at the posttest (on completion of the 20-hour intervention in July 2023)
2. A latent language variable measured using two ReadingScreen subtests (Word and Nonword Decoding), at the pretest (baseline) in January 2023 and at the posttest (on completion of the 20-hour intervention in July 2023)
3. A latent variable of writing development, involving measures of lexis, syntax, semantics and narrative, undertaken at posttest only (on completion of the 20-hour intervention in July 2023)

Completion date

30/09/2023

Eligibility**Key inclusion criteria**

1. Children must be in a Year 5 class (or a mixed class containing Year 5 pupils)
2. Children must attend mainstream schools with a percentage eligibility for free schools meals (FSM) of 20.8 or above at the point of recruitment

Participant type(s)

Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment

27/06/2022

Date of final enrolment

30/11/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Royal Shakespeare Company

Waterside

Stratford-upon-Avon

United Kingdom

CV376BB

Sponsor information

Organisation

Royal Shakespeare Company (United Kingdom)

ROR

<https://ror.org/03h41b845>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Charity

Funder Name

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Alternative Name(s)

PHF

Funding Body Type

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location

United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study will be stored in a publicly available repository (<https://www.cos.io/products/osf>). Data will be anonymised.

IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes