

# Evaluation of Infant Language Link: an intervention aiming to improve expressive and receptive language skills among children aged 5-6

<b>Submission date</b> 10/08/2023	<b>Recruitment status</b> No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b> 15/08/2023	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 22/01/2025	<b>Condition category</b> 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

For children with speech and language difficulties, early intervention is crucial for success in education. Targeted interventions sometimes fail to reach the correct pupils. Infant Language Link enables schools to identify and support children in reception, years 1 and 2 with mild to moderate language needs. The intervention uses a graduated approach to determine the level and intensity of support for pupils, using a standardised universal screening tool to accurately assess pupil ability and tiered levels of support to improve language skills.

### Who can participate?

Mainstream state primary schools with pupils in reception (age 4-5) and in years 1 and 2 (aged 5-7)

### What does the study involve?

The intervention is designed for schools to identify and support pupils from reception (age 4-5), and provide continued support for pupils in years 1 and 2 (aged 5-7). For this evaluation, it will be delivered to year 1 pupils, although intervention schools will be free to also provide the programme to pupils in reception and year 2 should they wish. All pupils in the class are provided with support, and those identified as needing further support participate in targeted group sessions led by Teaching Assistants (TAs).

The online screening tool for assessing pupil language needs is a central part of the intervention. This screening takes place at the start of the intervention period. The Infant Language Link learning materials will be provided to schools; these include 500 group and classroom resources, 12 planned termly language groups, 24 individual teaching plans and 52 handouts for parents.

Guidance notes and session plans for teachers are supplied along with resources to support the delivery of engaging, interactive teaching and learning activities, for example, story planners, talk templates and concept cards. The session plans and ILL learning resources enable TAs to

deliver the targeted group sessions in a structured way. Tracking sheets allow teachers and TAs to record individual pupil progress. Schools in the control group continue providing language support on a business-as-usual basis during the study period.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Pupils could benefit from improvements in receptive and expressive language skills. The programme is delivered in school during school hours by regular school staff. As such, there are no risks of physical or psychological harm beyond those already applicable in a school setting.

Where is the study run from?

The intervention is delivered in Y1 classrooms at schools in England by teachers and teaching assistants employed by the participating schools. These school staff will have received online training offered by the delivery team, who administer the programme remotely and do not visit schools in person.

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

October 2022 to January 2025

Who is funding the study?

Education Endowment Foundation (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Martin Culliney (Evaluation lead), [m.culliney@shu.ac.uk](mailto:m.culliney@shu.ac.uk)

### **Study website**

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/infant-language-link-2022-23-trial>

## **Contact information**

### **Type(s)**

Principal Investigator

### **Contact name**

Dr Martin Culliney

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## **Additional identifiers**

**EudraCT/CTIS number**

Nil known

**IRAS number****ClinicalTrials.gov number**

Nil known

**Secondary identifying numbers**

Nil known

## **Study information**

**Scientific Title**

Evaluation of Infant Language Link: an intervention aiming to improve expressive and receptive language skills among children aged 5-6

**Acronym**

ILL

**Study objectives**

Research questions

1. Primary research question: What is the impact of the intervention on Year 1 pupils' language and communication skills, as measured by the primary outcome (CELF linguistic concepts and sentence comprehension subtests and RAPT combined)?

2. Secondary research questions:

2.1. What is the impact of the intervention on the subgroup of Year 1 pupils who received targeted support, as measured by the primary and secondary outcomes?

2.2. What is the impact of the intervention on the subgroup of Year 1 FSM pupils, as measured by the primary outcome?

2.3. What is the impact of the intervention on Year 1 pupils' receptive and expressive language skills as measured by individual subtests of the outcome measure (CELF linguistic concepts and sentence comprehension; RAPT information and grammar)?

2.4. What is the impact of the intervention on the subgroup of EAL pupils, as measured by the primary outcome?

**Ethics approval required**

Ethics approval required

**Ethics approval(s)**

Approved 07/02/2023, Sheffield Hallam research ethics committee (Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, S1 1WB, United Kingdom; None available; SSH-ResearchEthics@shu.ac.uk), ref: ER51329820

**Study design**

Two-arm cluster-randomized controlled trial with random allocation at the school level

**Primary study design**

Interventional

**Secondary study design**

Cluster randomised trial

**Study setting(s)**

School

**Study type(s)**

Efficacy

**Participant information sheet**

See trial outputs table

**Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Expressive and receptive language

**Interventions**

This trial is evaluating the Infant Language Link intervention. Pupils in schools randomly allocated to the intervention group will receive the programme, which uses a standardised universal screening tool to assess pupil ability in language and communication. The results are used to determine whether additional support is required through small group or one-to-one sessions delivered by teaching assistants, who receive training from the developer in the form of two 90-minute webinars. Teachers at intervention schools also attend two online training sessions. All delivery takes place at school during normal lesson times. Pupils in control schools continue to be taught under business-as-usual conditions.

Randomisation will be conducted at the school level to minimise spillover risk. The procedure will be conducted using the 'stratarand' command in Stata. All schools will be allocated at the same time. Three stratifiers will be used, specifically whether a school: is/not (1/0) in an Education Investment Area, does/not (1/0) use any relevant interventions (such as NELI, Wellcomm and Talk Boost), and uses external speech and language therapy support.

**Intervention Type**

Behavioural

**Primary outcome measure**

Impact of Infant Language Link on language and communication skills in pupils measured using a combined measure derived from the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals - Fifth Edition (CELF5) receptive and expressive language subtests and the Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT) at the end of Year 1

**Secondary outcome measures**

Impact of Infant Language Link on language and communication skills in pupils measured using the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals - Fifth Edition (CELF 5) receptive and expressive language subtests and the Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT) as separate measures at the end of Year 1

**Overall study start date**

01/10/2022

**Completion date**

31/01/2025

## Eligibility

### Key inclusion criteria

All maintained mainstream schools with pupils in the appropriate age range can take part provided that they have not already used the Infant Language Link intervention.

### Participant type(s)

Learner/student

### Age group

Child

### Lower age limit

5 Years

### Upper age limit

6 Years

### Sex

Both

### Target number of participants

3400 pupils across 170 schools

### Key exclusion criteria

Pupils diagnosed with:

1. Autistic spectrum disorders (ASD)
2. Selective mutism
3. Global learning difficulties

### Date of first enrolment

01/03/2023

### Date of final enrolment

30/06/2023

## Locations

### Countries of recruitment

England

United Kingdom

### Study participating centre

Sheffield Institute of Education  
10101 Arundel Building

Sheffield  
United Kingdom  
S1 1AY

## Sponsor information

### Organisation

Education Endowment Foundation

### Sponsor details

5th Floor, Millbank Tower  
21–24 Millbank  
London  
England  
United Kingdom  
SW1P 4QP  
+44 (0)204 536 3999  
info@eefoundation.org.uk

### Sponsor type

Charity

### Website

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

### ROR

<https://ror.org/03bhd6288>

## Funder(s)

### Funder type

Charity

### 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

## Results and Publications

**Publication and dissemination plan**  
Report to be published on funder website, freely available online.

**Intention to publish date**  
01/04/2025

**Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan**  
The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be stored in a non-publicly available repository, the EEF data archive, as pseudonymised (meaningless pupil and school identifiers) pupil assessment scores study data. Researchers can apply for access. Consent from participants was required and obtained.

**IPD sharing plan summary**  
Stored in non-publicly available repository

**Study outputs**

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Participant information sheet</a>			15/08/2023	No	Yes
<a href="#">Protocol file</a>	version 2.0	07/05/2024	22/01/2025	No	No
<a href="#">Statistical Analysis Plan</a>	version 1.0	08/05/2024	22/01/2025	No	No