

# Evaluation of the mixed attainment grouping of year 7 and 8 students within English and mathematics

<b>Submission date</b> 04/09/2015	<b>Recruitment status</b> No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b> 13/10/2015	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 14/09/2018	<b>Condition category</b> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

The subject of grouping school students based on their ability in academic subjects such as English and math is widely debated. Recent studies have shown that for children who have a record of low attainment at school previously, being taught in mixed ability groups can help them to progress better with their schoolwork. This initial study aims to find out whether teaching English and mathematics in mixed attainment groups has an impact on attainment and self-confidence in these subjects. The study is also designed to test whether a larger trial testing this aim would be feasible.

### Who can participate?

Secondary schools which currently (or are willing to) practice mixed ability grouping for English and/or math in years 7 and 8.

### What does the study involve?

Included schools are randomly allocated into two groups. English and mathematics teachers at the schools included in the first group (intervention group) attend six intensive workshops as well as additional coaching in the school, in order to support teachers to support pupils and teach more effectively. Schools allocated to the second group (control group) continue with their student grouping practices as normal. After two years, pupils from all schools will take English and mathematics tests to find out if their level of attainment has changed compared to at the start of the study.

### 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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## Contact information

**Type(s)**  
Scientific

**Contact name**  
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## Additional identifiers

### Study information

**Scientific Title**  
Pilot randomised controlled trial to explore the use of mixed attainment grouping of year 7 and 8 students within English and mathematics

**Acronym**  
BPMA

**Study objectives**  
The primary research questions are:  
1. Can secondary schools be recruited to a mixed attainment RCT?  
2. What are the barriers to schools adopting a mixed attainment approach?

In addition, students will be tested to ensure that mixed attainment grouping does not result in a significant drop in attainment in mathematics and/or English. Pupil surveys will also be administered to measure self-confidence in mathematics and 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 pilot cluster randomised controlled trial

## **Primary study design**

Interventional

## **Study type(s)**

Quality of life

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

Attainment in Math and English in schools

## **Interventions**

This pilot trial will include two experimental groups: 20 Secondary schools will be randomly allocated to one of the two groups. 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: The application of the intervention will involve presentation and application of the key pedagogic principles such as principles to be applied in grouping pupils and principles to be applied across groups. This will be facilitated by at least six intensive workshops attended by each key teacher in the pilot study, with additional coaching/critical friend support in school. These workshops will outline and justify the principles to be applied; and provide time, space and guidance for Year 7 mathematics and English teachers to design appropriate grouping approaches, support to pupils, and curriculum, for application of the principles in their own school context.

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(s)**

While this is not a fully powered trial, testing will take place in year 8 after two years of the intervention to ensure that mixed attainment grouping does not result in a significant drop in attainment in mathematics and/or English. A random sample of 60 pupils from year 8 will sit these tests in summer 2017. Their key stage 2 test results from academic year 2014-15 will be used to measure attainment at baseline.

## **Key secondary outcome(s)**

Secondary outcome measures for this study are pupils' self confidence in English and mathematics. These 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.

## **Completion date**

30/11/2017

# Eligibility

## Key inclusion criteria

1. State secondary schools in England that currently practice mixed attainment grouping
2. State secondary schools in England willing to change their practice to mixed attainment grouping for English and/or maths in years 7 and 8

## Participant type(s)

Other

## Healthy volunteers allowed

No

## Age group

Other

## Sex

All

## Key exclusion criteria

Participants not fulfilling inclusion criteria.

## Date of first enrolment

26/03/2015

## Date of final enrolment

12/06/2015

# Locations

## Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

## Study participating centre

**National Foundation for Educational Research**

The Mere

Upton Park

Slough

United Kingdom

SL1 2DQ

# Sponsor information

## Organisation

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

## ROR

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

## Funder(s)

### Funder type

Charity

### Funder Name

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

## Results and Publications

### 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?
<a href="#">Funder report results</a>	results			No	No
<a href="#">Participant information sheet</a>	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
<a href="#">Study website</a>	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes