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Does the Tips by Text programme, a text-message curriculum for parents of children in reception, improve children's literacy, language, numeracy and socio-emotional skills?

Submission date
31/01/2020

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
30/04/2020

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
19/08/2022

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Tips by Text is a text message curriculum for parents which aims to improve young children's literacy, language, numeracy and socio-emotional skills. The text messages are designed to provide parents with information and strategies to help their children's development outside of the school environment.
Existing studies of similar interventions outside of the UK have shown positive impacts for preschool children. Indeed, the Tips by Text project is inspired by research in the US which has shown positive impacts of a texting programme on children's literacy outcomes. For this study, the texting programme has been adapted to the UK context by the Behavioural Insights Team. In this study, we aim to test the impact of the Tips by Text programme using a randomised controlled trial (RCT). This means that some parents will receive the programme and some will not, and this will be decided using random selection. We will examine whether the programme has a positive impact on children's literacy skills, as well as on their communication and language, numeracy, and socio-emotional outcomes.

Who can participate?
State-funded primary schools in the North-East of England are eligible to participate. Parents of children in reception year in the recruited schools are then eligible to be part of the study.
Tips by Text will be evaluated with around 2,700 children in Reception year (4-5 year olds) and their parents. We will recruit around 105 (and a maximum of 125) schools from the North- East of England to participate in the trial. Larger schools and those with higher intakes of free school meals pupils will be prioritised in the recruitment.

What does the study involve?
Parents randomised to receive the programme will receive 3 text messages per week over an approximately 9-month period. Parents not randomised to receive the programme will not receive the texts.
Three types of messages are sent. The three types of messages are: "FACT" texts, designed to

inform and motivate parents by highlighting the importance of a particular skill or set of skills, “TIP” texts, designed to include short, simple, and highly-specific activities for parents to do with their children that build on existing family routines and “GROWTH” texts, which provide encouragement, reinforcement, and extend the TIP texts.
All children in the study will be asked to complete a short literacy assessment at the beginning and end of their reception year. These will be used to compare literacy outcomes for children whose parents have and have not received the programme.
Impacts on language, numeracy and socio-emotional development will also be considered, using children’s results from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (which provides an assessment of children’s development across a range of areas at the end of reception year) and from a standard questionnaire used to evaluate children’s socio-emotional development.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
No risks associated with participating are foreseen. Parents can withdraw themselves and/or their child from the study at any time.

Where is the study run from?
The evaluation is being carried out jointly by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (UK) and the Institute for Employment Studies (UK). The Tips by Text programme is designed and delivered by the Behavioural Insights Team.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
The study began in November 2018 and is expected to complete in Summer 2021.

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

Who is the main contact?
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Contact information

Type(s)
Public

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
A randomised trial of whether the Tips by Text programme, a text-message curriculum for parents of children in reception year, improves children's literacy, language, numeracy and socio-emotional skills

Acronym
Tips by Text

Study objectives
1. Does the Tips by Text intervention improve Reception children’s literacy outcomes?
2.1. Does the Tips by Text intervention improve Reception children’s numeracy outcomes?
2.2. Does the Tips by Text intervention improve Reception children’s language and communication outcomes?
2.3. Does the Tips by Text intervention improve Reception children’s social development skills?
2.4. Does the Tips by Text intervention improve literacy outcomes differentially for children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)?
2.5. Does the Tips by Text intervention improve literacy outcomes differentially for children with low and high baseline attainment?

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 19/02/2019, the Research Ethics Committee of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) (2 Dean Trench Street, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HE; +44 (0)20 7222 7665; j.kirkland@niesr.ac.uk)

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Two-arm multi-centre randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Home learning environment, education, children's literacy, language, numeracy and socio-emotional skills

Interventions
Eligible schools are state-funded schools based in the North-East of England. Those schools with more than one Reception class and with larger numbers of free school meals pupils will be prioritised in recruitment. Parents of all reception class pupils will be eligible for the Tips by Text intervention.

The Tips by Text intervention is a text-message curriculum for parents of children in reception year.

Randomization takes place at the parent level. In schools recruited to the trial, randomization will take place within all reception classes, so that half of the parents in each class will be assigned to the treatment arm, and thus receive the intervention, while the other half will be assigned to the control arm, who will not receive the intervention.

The text messages will be sent to parents over an approximately nine-month period, with 3 texts sent per week. These text messages are sent to parents by the delivery team (the Behavioural Insights Team).

Baseline pre-testing for the primary outcome measure took place in September-October 2019 and the same tests will be repeated at the end of reception year in June-July 2020. The assessments include:
1. The York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC). The version of the YARC suitable for 4 to 7 year olds is called Early Reading and covers four dimensions: sound isolation, sound deletion, letter-sound knowledge, and early word recognition. To reduce testing time and burden on the school, only the former two measures will be used as a pre-test as they are considered the most sensitive and more appropriate for the younger age of the children and then all four dimensions will be used at post-test.

The following measures are used at end reception year (post-test) only:
2. Children's achievement on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) to assess communication and language, and numeracy. We will also conduct an exploratory analysis of children's literacy and personal and social development outcomes as measured by the EYFSP
3. Social-behavioral development as assessed by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Parents participating in the study will be asked to complete an online survey, mainly with the aim of asking about their experiences of the intervention. A small sample of parents will also be invited to participate in telephone interviews, to enable more in-depth exploration of their experiences, any barriers or facilitators, and perceived outcomes.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
Literacy as measured by the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC) at baseline and after 9 months.

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Communication and language, and numeracy measured by children's achievement on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) after 9 months
2. Social-behavioral development as assessed by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire after 9 months
3. We will also conduct an exploratory analysis of children's literacy and personal and social development outcomes as measured by the EYFSP after 9 months

Completion date
27/02/2021

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Parent of a pupil in the Reception year group of an eligible state-funded school based in the North-East of England

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
3662

Key exclusion criteria
1. Unable to access the Tips by Text intervention on a mobile phone
2. Informed consent not given

Date of first enrolment
01/02/2019

Date of final enrolment
29/10/2019

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Behavioural Insights Team
4 Matthew Parker Street
London
United Kingdom
SW1H 9NP

Study participating centre

National Institute of Economic and Social Research
2 Dean Trench Street
Smith Square
London
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Study participating centre
Institute for Employment Studies
City Gate
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Sponsor information

Organisation
Education Endowment Foundation

ROR
https://ror.org/03bhd6288

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Education Endowment Foundation

Alternative Name(s)
EducEndowFoundn, The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 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

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during and/or analysed in this study will be stored in a non-publicly available repository; the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Data Archive, which is managed by the Fischer Family Trust (FFT). Further details are available here: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Evaluation/Submitting_your_data_to_the_FFT_archive/Archiving_EEF_project_data.pdf
These data will be submitted to the archive by the evaluation team within three months of project completion. The dataset will be at individual level (i.e. one row per pupil), including information on the treatment they receive and the outcomes of testing (at baseline and follow-up). The data will be archived for an indefinite period for archiving, historical or scientific research purposes, with access criteria determined by the EEF and FFT. The legal basis for processing data is legitimate interests, with individuals able to express objections to data processing. Data will be available in a pseudo-anonymised format so that future analysis incorporating data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) could be facilitated.

IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Funder report results		29/04/2022	19/08/2022	No	No
Protocol file	version v1.1	03/11/2020	10/02/2021	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes