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An Evaluation of Teaching Assistant-Based Small Group Support for Literacy

Submission date
27/11/2014

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
20/01/2015

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
18/07/2018

Condition category
Other

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

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Many children do not leave primary school with the expected level of literacy. This has an impact on subsequent educational performance and is also linked to poor labour market outcomes. While much is known about the characteristics of struggling readers, there is much less known about practical programmes capable of helping educators prevent or remediate early reading deficits. In this study, we intend to analyse the effects of two methods (treatments) of small group tuition for literacy for Year 1 students in English schools. In particular, the study is designed to answer the following questions:
1. Do the treatments have an impact on reading outcomes within one academic year?
2. What treatment is more effective?
3. Do the treatments produce different results across students with different characteristics?
4. Is there any evidence of effects on the group of non-treated students?
5. Do any effects persist one year later?

Who can participate?
Coventry University will attempt to recruit 60 schools in Birmingham, Coventry, Warwickshire, Worcester and Solihull. In particular, an effort will be made to encourage schools with disadvantaged students to participate during the recruitment stage. Coventry University is running the recruitment event.

What does the study involve?
Schools will be paired according to different characteristics, like the percentage of disadvantaged students. Within each pair of schools, one school will be randomly assigned to the treatment group and the other school will be part of the control group. Schools in the treatment group will receive the treatment in Year 1. Control schools will receive the treatment in Year 2. Students in treatment schools will be randomly assigned to one of 3 groups:
1. Support from small group teaching assistance for literacy using a computer programme
2. Support from small group teaching assistance for literacy using other methods
3. No additional support other than the normal ('business as usual' control group)
Baseline reading tests will be organised by Coventry University at the beginning of the academic year, and compared with the results of additional reading tests by the end of Year 1.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There are no risks of participating for either the schools or the students.
The benefits of participating for schools is in terms of the training that their teaching assistants will undertake, either in Year 1 or 2. The benefits of participating for students are the hypothesised positive effects of using teaching assistants for small group tuition for literacy outcomes.
The benefits of the study are also for teachers and schools, since the results will provide guidance on how best to use both teacher and school resources to improve the attainment of pupils.

Where is the study run from?
The development and implementation of the intervention will be led by Dr Janet Vousden and Professor Clare Wood, Coventry University (recruitment of schools, administering baseline tests, training teacher assistants, administer assessments by the end of Year 1, etc.).
The recruitment will be in 60 schools in Birmingham, Coventry, Warwickshire, Worcester and Solihull (UK).
The impact evaluation will be led by Professor Sandra McNally, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics.
The process evaluation will be led by Dr. Heather Rolfe, National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR). The purpose of the process evaluation is to assess the fidelity of the intervention and to help explain the impact of small group tuition as measured by the study.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
October 2013 to July 2017.
The preparation and recruitment of schools will be done between January and July 2014. Baseline tests will be organised in all participating schools in September 2014. Randomisation will be conducted after the baseline tests have been administered, in October 2014. For schools that take part in the study, those allocated to the treatment group will receive the treatments in academic year 2014-2015, those allocated to the control group will receive the treatments in academic year 2015-2016.

Who is funding the study?
The Education Endowment Foundation, an independent charity originally funded by a grant from the Department for Education, dedicated to raising the educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils in primary and secondary schools in England.

Who is the main contact?
Professor Sandra McNally
Director of the Education and Skills Programme at the Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Prof Sandra McNally

Contact details

Centre for Economic Performance
London School of Economics
Houghton Street
London
United Kingdom
WC2A 2AE

Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
An Evaluation of Teaching Assistant-Based Small Group Support for Literacy: a cluster randomised trial

Study objectives
The main hypothesis we would like to test whether small group tuition using teacher assistants for students in Year 1 (of the English National Curriculum) improves the literacy of students in treated groups. Additionally, we would like to test which of two treatments is better: 1. Support from small group teaching assistance for literacy using a computer programme; 2. Support from small group teaching assistance for literacy using other methods.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
The recruitment of schools and implementation of the treatments has been approved by the Coventry University Ethics Committee (ethics.uni@coventry.ac.uk), 16/12/2013, Reference number P19172.

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Pair matching cluster randomisation across schools into treatment and control groups. Student level randomisation across the 3 conditions in the treated schools.

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Small group teaching assistance for literacy

Interventions
Students in treatment schools will be randomly assigned to one of 3 groups:
1. Support from small group teaching assistance for literacy using a computer programme;
2. Support from small group teaching assistance for literacy using other methods
3. No additional support other than the normal (“business as usual" control group)

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
General reading ability, as measured by progress on the PIRA assessment

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Word reading (Diagnostic Test of Word Reading Performance)
2. Receptive vocabulary (the British Picture Vocabulary Scales 3)
3. Phonological and letter sounds skills (using selected subtests from the Primary Inventory of Phonological Awareness).
4. Additional secondary outcomes will be KS1 reading and writing one year later

Completion date
01/07/2016

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Coventry University will attempt to recruit 60 primary schools in Birmingham, Coventry, Warwickshire, Worcester and Solihull
All students in Year 1 in participating schools are part of the study group (except where parents have signed the opt-out consent form)

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
Students whose parents sign opt-out consent forms

Date of first enrolment
01/01/2014

Date of final enrolment
31/07/2014

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Coventry University
Priory Street
Coventry
United Kingdom
CV1 5FB

Study participating centre
Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics
2nd floor
32 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London
United Kingdom
WC2A 3PH

Study participating centre
National Institute of Social and Economic Research
2 Dean Trench Street
London
United Kingdom
SW1P 3HE

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
Data was securely sent to the funder of the trial (the Education Endowment Foundation: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/), via the fft education datalab (https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/). All the data used to produce the findings in the report for the Education Endowment Foundation was sent, together with the code that produced the results. This includes individual data regarding the baseline and endline reading tests, as well as data collected by the implementation team and data coming from the National Pupil Database. The data includes an individual anonymous identifier (the Pupil Matching Reference number used by the National Pupil Database). With regards to consent, parents were asked to opt-out if they did not wish their child to participate in the trial.

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
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes