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Improving writing outcomes through book-based learning: a randomised control trial

Submission date 01/09/2025	**Recruitment status** No longer recruiting	[_] Prospectively registered [X] Protocol [_] Statistical analysis plan [_] Results [_] Individual participant data [_] Record updated in last year
Registration date 02/09/2025	**Overall study status** Completed	
Last Edited 02/09/2025	**Condition category** Other	

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

The Writing Roots programme is a whole-school writing intervention targeting children's writing ability through a book-based teaching approach designed to expose children to a more diverse range of texts and writing conventions, and apply this in their writing. This trial will evaluate whether this leads to improvements in children's writing and their confidence in their writing ability in key stage 1 and key stage 2, and offers evidence on an innovative approach to improve literacy outcomes in the UK curriculum.

Who can participate?

The study will look at the outcomes in year 2 and year 5 pupils in the 2025/2026 academic year, to capture the impact on key stages 1 and 2 respectively. Schools will be state-funded mainstream primary schools, catering to all year groups from 1 to 6.

What does the study involve?

Of the 100 schools recruited, 50 have been assigned to the intervention group, and 50 to the control group. Schools in the intervention group will receive the Writing Roots programme, while schools in the control group will carry on with their usual delivery of literacy teaching.
As part of Writing Roots, schools in the intervention group will receive INSET training delivered by Literacy Tree, introducing teachers to the teaching package at the beginning of the academic year. Teachers in different year groups will receive year-group specific training alongside membership to the Literacy Tree Platform, copies of all the texts, curriculum maps, progression documents, and access to an online classroom toolkit to support curriculum delivery.
Before and after delivery, children in all schools did a short writing exercise to assess their baseline writing ability according to the Writing Assessment Measure. At the end of the study the writing self-efficacy of year 5 children will be surveyed on their perceptions of their own writing capabilities and measured according to the Writing Self-Efficacy Measure.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

The evaluation of Writing Roots delivery may help children and teachers looking to revamp literacy teaching in the future. There are no disadvantages or risks to children from taking part in Writing Roots programme activities or assessments.

Where is the study run from?
Writing Roots is designed and delivered by a team at Literacy Tree, a book-based teaching platform for primary school English. The independent evaluators are based at RAND Europe and the University of Leeds (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
November 2024 to September 2026

Who is funding the study?
The Education Endowment Fund (EEF)

Who is the main contact?
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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Using the Writing Roots programme to improve writing attainment: a two-armed cluster randomised trial

Acronym
WR

Study objectives
The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is funding a research study looking at Writing Roots, a whole-school programme designed to improve children's writing.

Delivered by Literacy Tree, Writing Roots is a whole-school book-based curriculum and professional development programme aimed at improving writing outcomes for pupils aged 4–

11 years (Year 1 to Year 6). Through daily 1-hour lessons, pupils engage with diverse texts and explicit teaching of writing conventions, as an alternative to the conventional 'genre-based' approach to teaching writing, to improve confidence, motivation and stamina whilst developing their writing skills. Writing Roots aims to raise the profile of writing in schools more generally, encouraging schools to consider how they foster a writing culture and make pupil writing visible, with the idea that motivation and engagement are pre-requisites to the development of writing skills.

The aim of the research project is to understand if Writing Roots improves children's writing outcomes, by comparing data from children in schools that take part in Writing Roots to similar children in schools that did not take part in the programme. The intended outcomes of the programme include writing skills and writing self-efficacy — pupils' beliefs in their own writing ability. The research is therefore expected to make an important contribution to understanding what works in developing children's writing and pupil attainment, as well as effective teaching strategies.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 24/02/2025, RAND Europe Research Ethics Committee (Eastbrook, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8BF, UK; +44 (0)1223 353 329; researchethics@randeurope.org), ref: 022807.021

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Two-armed cluster randomized control trial

Study type(s)
Efficacy

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Writing ability in primary school children

Interventions
Writing Roots. A whole-school writing curriculum delivered over the course of a year received by treatment schools, who are randomly allocated with randomisation stratified by if they are in an Education Investement Area.

The key components of Writing Roots are:
1. Online INSET delivered to teachers across all years
2. Year group specific training once a term
3. 1-hour daily teaching of Writing Roots curriculum for the whole school year

Control schools continue with business as usual.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)

Writing ability measured using the Writing Assessment Measure pre and post Writing Roots delivery in year 2 and year 5

Key secondary outcome(s)
Writing self-efficacy measured using the Writing Self-Efficacy Measure pre and post Writing Roots delivery in year 2 and year 5

Completion date
25/09/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Schools eligible for recruitment if they:
1. Are a state-funded mainstream primary school with all year groups from Year 1 to Year 6 (whole primary school), with no more than two year groups in mixed-year classes.

Pupils from these schools are included in the evaluation if they are in year 2 or year 5 in the 2025 /2026 academic year and parental consent for their participation is not withdrawn.

Participant type(s)
Learner/student

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
6 Years

Upper age limit
10 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
6481

Key exclusion criteria
Schools are not eligible for recruitment if they:
1. Are participating in the following EEF trials: Pathways Literacy, Power of Reading, The OTTO Club, Rehearsal Room Writing, or any whole-school trials
2. Currently use Literacy Tree's Writing Roots programme and have not participated in any Literacy Tree programme or training for the past 2 years

Date of first enrolment
16/06/2025

Date of final enrolment
16/07/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
RAND Europe
RAND Europe
Eastbrook House
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
United Kingdom
CB2 8BF

Study participating centre
Primary schools
-
United Kingdom
-

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 and analysed during the current study will be stored in a publicly available repository (Office for National Statistics). This data will not be personally identifiable. The EEF's webpage on the project is here: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk /projects-and-evaluation/projects/the-one-project-2022-23-trial. The type of data stored are demographic information such as gender and eligibility for free school meals, child assessment scores, school attended. SRS-accredited researchers can apply to the EEF for access, setting out why they wish to use the data. The final report is due to be published in Spring 2027. Data will be available in the SRS around 6 months – 1 year after this. The basis for RAND Europe's use of children's data is legitimate interest. Parents are given the option to withdraw their child from study. Participant data will be linked to NPD (National Pupil Database) data in the ONS SRS using pupil-matching references (thereby removing participant identifying information). There are no ethical or legal restrictions.

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			02/09/2025	No	Yes
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Protocol (other)			02/09/2025	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes