

The Literacy Octopus: trialling activities and support to improve pupils' Key Stage 2 literacy

Submission date 12/09/2014	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 06/10/2014	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 13/09/2018	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

This study aims to help teachers to improve pupils' Key Stage 2 learning skills, all based on the latest research evidence. The project is to find out how best to support primary schools' literacy improvement.

Who can participate?

Primary schools (and those middle schools with Year 5/6 classes) in the North and South of England will be invited to take part. The recruitment is limited to schools close enough to attend day-long events in Leeds/York or London. Schools from elsewhere in the country can take part as long as they are prepared to travel.

What does the study involve?

Schools that take part will be randomly allocated to receive free support or materials via one of several different approaches, all designed to improve Key Stage 2 literacy by drawing on research evidence. Activities range from light touch engagement with materials by teachers, to more active support and online help. To participate in the project, a small number of school staff will complete an initial survey during the autumn term 2014. Participating schools will then be randomly allocated to one of nine arms or groups, or a control group. Each group will receive a different type of evidence-based literacy support and/or materials during the spring and early summer term of 2015. Staff will complete a follow-up survey in spring 2016. Pupil's performance will be measured using Key Stage 2 literacy results from the National Pupil Database (NPD). In addition to the main study, there will be a 'passive trial', where a large number of primary schools across the country will be randomly allocated to receive materials or to be a 'business as usual' control group.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

The study is an opportunity for schools to receive free support from high profile education organisations to support school improvement. We are trying to find out the very best ways of supporting schools to improve literacy through evidence-based resources. Being allocated to the control group is also extremely valuable to the study; these schools can have access to many of the materials and resources after the study has ended. Schools will receive feedback on the results of the surveys after the final survey has been completed. The risks of participating in the

study focus on schools' commitment and time to take part. Commitments will vary depending on which activity schools are allocated to. For example, where schools are allocated to learning events, these are taking place in London and York/Leeds. Some of these events are taking place on week days; schools will need to organise and pay for supply cover for staff to attend these training events. Other events are taking place at weekends, and some in after-school twilight sessions. For some events, a refundable booking fee will apply. Where schools are allocated to online resources, school staff will need access to the internet to take part in interactive web discussions or to develop their use of online tools. The amount of time involved and how schools get involved will vary according to the activities they are invited to take part in. All schools will need to ensure that their Key Stage 2 literacy coordinators, Key Stage 2 teachers, head teachers and other senior leaders can take part in the initial and follow-up surveys (about 15 minutes each to complete). If staff have left the school at the follow-up stage, other relevant staff members will need to complete the follow-up survey.

Where is the study run from?

Four partner organisations will be delivering the activities. These are: the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) (part of Durham University), the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) (at York University), Campaign for Learning in partnership with Train Visual, and NatCen with ResearchEd. Activities themselves will take place in schools, or at event locations in London and York/Leeds.

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

Recruitment of schools takes place from July to December 2014. Activities with teachers and schools take place from January to July 2015. A follow-up staff survey takes place in Spring 2016. Pupil attainment results will be collected in 2016 and 2017. The study is expected to end in March 2018.

Who is funding the project?

1. Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (UK)
2. Department for Education (DfE) (UK)
3. Greater London Authority (UK) - London Schools Excellence Fund

Who is the main contact?

Dr Ben Styles (Principal Investigator), b.styles@nfer.ac.uk
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Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title

A multi-armed randomised controlled trial on the effectiveness of different ways of engaging primary school teachers and primary school leaders with evidence-based approaches to improving Key Stage 2 literacy; and measuring their effect on pupils' attainment

Study objectives

International evidence shows a strong correlation between high performing education systems and the effective use of research in schools. The trial will test different methods of engaging teachers and school leaders with research and measure their effect on pupils' attainment. The strategies range from face-to-face instruction, access to websites and Twitter chats, posting information booklets to schools, professional development sessions and research conferences aimed at teachers. In particular, the study will analyse the difference in impact between simply giving schools access to information versus more active engagement through online guides, conferences or training sessions. The study will explore secondary outcomes around teachers' awareness, understanding and actions (changed practice) in relation to the activity or research they have engaged with.

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

NFER's Code of Practice Group, 03/07/2014

Study design

Multi-armed effectiveness randomised controlled trial (main active trial); plus a trial of dissemination activity to a wider sample (passive trial)

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

This study is exploring the nature and impact of research communication, research engagement and research use by teachers and schools

Interventions

Through an RCT design, schools will be allocated to receive free information or support from one of these organisations, or to a control group where they continue 'business as usual'. The activities will include the following:

The Institute for Effective Education at York University will:

1. Distribute print and electronic materials that explain research findings and identify effective

interventions

2. Hold an evidence fair that gives schools an opportunity to discover more about interventions that can help primary school pupils with their literacy

Campaign for Learning, in partnership with Train Visual will:

3. Give schools free access to the Teaching How2s website

4. Provide additional and ongoing support on how to use the Teaching How2s resources as part of their school improvement and teacher training plans

The Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring, part of Durham University, will:

5. Distribute a booklet on research-based strategies for teaching literacy in Key Stage 2, tips for teachers cards and posters

6. Distribute the booklet and follow this up with light touch CPD sessions

7. Distribute the booklet and follow this up with CPD sessions, observation, and pupil diagnostics
NatCen and ResearchEd will:

8. Invite primary school teachers to attend a conference exploring relevant research about literacy education

9. Alongside the conference, invite teachers to an online community offering support and activities before and after the conference to help them use research findings in their own schools

Control group

10. Business as usual

In the passive trial a large number of primary schools across the country will be randomly allocated to receive materials or to be a 'business as usual' control group.

Intervention Type

Other

Phase

Not Applicable

Primary outcome(s)

Pupil attainment in Key Stage 2 literacy (according to National Pupil Dataset records), collected in September 2015, 2016 and 2017

Key secondary outcome(s)

Teachers' survey responses at baseline and follow-up, exploring their awareness, understanding and actions (e.g., changes in practice) in relation to research use

Completion date

31/03/2018

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

For the main trial, the principal inclusion criteria are:

1. Schools in local authorities in England, limited to travel distances to and from London or Leeds /York within a day

2. Primary schools (or those middle schools with Year 5s and 6s, i.e. where Key Stage 2 is taught)
Headteachers, Key Stage 2 literacy coordinators, other Key Stage 2 teachers and leaders

For the passive trial:

1. All primary schools in England (or those middle schools with a Year 5 and Year 6) that have not been randomised for the main trial

Participant type(s)

Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

The main exclusion criteria for the main trial are:

1. Schools from local authorities deemed too far to travel to and from London or York/Leeds within a day
2. Schools from the independent sector
3. Special schools and pupil referral units
4. Schools that have already engaged with the research-use baseline survey through other EEF Research Use projects
5. A small number of other exclusions related to research engagement with the providers of the interventions

The main exclusion criteria for the passive trial are:

1. Schools that have agreed to take part in the main trial and that have been randomised for that trial. No LA exclusions relating to geography are required

Date of first enrolment

03/07/2014

Date of final enrolment

01/12/2014

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

National Foundation for Educational Research
Slough
United Kingdom
SL1 2DQ

Sponsor information

Organisation

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (UK)

ROR

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

Funder(s)

Funder type

Government

Funder Name

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (UK)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not provided at time of registration

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Funder report results	results	01/12/2017		No	No
Funder report results	results	01/12/2017		No	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes