

## Flexible Phonics

*This project is a collaboration between the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and the Institute of Education University College London.*

We are seeking state-funded primary schools (reception classes) in the Greater London area to take part in an innovative project testing a programme aiming to improve language and literacy amongst all reception age children. A version of the programme has already been tested in Canada and has been shown to **improve literacy by the equivalent of 2-3 additional months' progress.**

### What, how and when?

We will work with Reception class teachers and Teaching Assistants in the classroom delivery of new strategies designed to optimise the teaching of reading to all children. The work fits well around existing phonics programmes that can be delivered broadly as usual. A novel aspect of *Flexible Phonics* is that it gives children more strategies to flexibly read all words, and could be particularly powerful in enabling children to independently read novel exception words (words that break phonic rules such as 'the', 'two', 'between', 'above', etc). Children learn how to use phonics in close conjunction with authentic children's texts to become confident, motivated, readers.

**In this project, we are testing the impact of *Flexible Phonics* on pupil outcomes using a randomised controlled trial. This means that the curriculum will be delivered to half of the schools in the study. These schools will be chosen at random in Winter 2020.** Those who are allocated to receive the intervention will receive a full day and then a further half day of professional development training, a copy of a Teacher Manual and associated resources and they will also receive two in-class follow up visits where we can provide further feedback and guidance and (with teacher's consent) observe the classroom context. Those schools that are allocated to the control condition will not receive professional development training in *Flexible Phonics* and teachers will carry out their regular teaching as usual. Children will be assessed at the beginning and end of the study, irrespective of their school's allocation. Control condition schools will receive £1000 on completion of the study to thank them for taking part.

We will prepare an information sheet for participating schools to send to parents. Parents will also have the opportunity to withdraw their child from the study at any point. The number of school places is limited and sign-up closes in **July 2020**. Don't miss out - sign up today!

### What are the benefits to my school?

By participating in this study your school will if allocated to the Flexible Phonics intervention, receive:

- **Free** children's books to the value of £400 per school;
- **Free professional development training** from Professor Robert Savage, who has run successful reading interventions in the UK, Canada, Australia, and Hong Kong

- A programme that has the potential to improve pupils' reading attainment and prevent reading difficulties.
- The opportunity for your school to **work with the EEF to build groundbreaking evidence** on what works to improve educational outcomes for all children.

By participating in this study your school will if allocated to the *control* condition, receive:

- £1000 on completion of the study to thank you for taking part.
- The opportunity for your school to **work with the EEF to build groundbreaking evidence** on what works to improve educational outcomes for all children.

### What will it cost my school?

Participation is **free**. All costs will be covered by the EEF.

### How much time will it take my school?

The programme itself will be implemented entirely by your regular school staff who will receive professional training. Schools will be required to:

- Send out a parent information letter;
- Provide pupil level data;
- Enable all Reception staff (Teacher(s) and TA(s)) to attend 1 and a half days of professional training (multiple training dates will be made available).
- Facilitate pre and post testing in schools, delivered by trained researchers; and the 2 in-class visits to observe classrooms and discuss the programme with RAs;
- Participate in two short online surveys.
- The evaluation team may request to visit your school to better understand your experience.

### How will data sharing work?

Participating schools will be required to provide pupil data (including pupil name, date of birth, gender, unique pupil number) in order to facilitate the evaluation and enable linkage to the National Pupil Database.

All personal data collected as part of the study will be treated with the strictest confidence by the project team and processed only in accordance with the requirements of the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. IES have run research studies in more than 100 schools nationwide since the introduction of GDPR in May 2018. Further details about the precise roles of each member of the project team in relation to the processing of personal data will be included in a Memorandum of Understanding and information sheet for parents, which we will share in due course.

### Project team

- **The UCL Institute of Education** is a world-leading centre for research and teaching in social science and education, ranked number one for education worldwide in the 2019 QS World University Rankings for the fifth year running. In the most recent Research Excellence

Framework assessment of university research, 94% of the Institute's research was judged to be 'world class'.

- **The Institute for Employment Studies (IES):** IES is an independent, international centre of research and consultancy in education, public employment policy and organisational human resource management. They will independently evaluate the impact of the Flexible Phonics programme.
- **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF):** The EEF is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. They run projects which test the efficacy of education interventions to generate new evidence of what works.

### How will the curriculum be evaluated?

We will use short reading and related language assessment tests and qualitative feedback from teachers and parents to evaluate impact. At least one of your reception classes will receive a pre and post-test (a standard reading assessment which will take no longer than 10 minutes at pre- test and 20-30 minutes at post- test per child). You will be informed of which class(es) have been chosen for testing in September or October 2020. External researchers will come into your school to deliver these assessments.

### Key dates/timeline

Month	Activity
Nov 2019 - July 2020	Schools sign up to the project with a formal Memorandum of Agreement outlining commitments (first come, first served!)
Autumn 2020	Schools send the information sheet to parents and submit pupil data
Oct/Nov 2020	In school pre-testing of chosen classes (IES)
Winter 2020 /2021	Delivery of training to half of the schools begins (IoE)
End of May 2021	School's assessed delivery of Flexible Phonics intervention ends
May/June 2021	In school post-testing of chosen classes (IES)
Summer 2022	Results of RCT published (EEF)

### Next steps

We have limited spots for this project. If you are interested in participating or finding out more, please email: [flexiblephonics@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:flexiblephonics@ucl.ac.uk)

We look forward to hearing from you soon!