

Nuffield Early Language Intervention (re-grant)

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme is designed to improve the language skills of reception pupils (aged 4–5) and involves scripted individual and small-group language teaching sessions delivered by trained teaching assistants (TAs).

NELI is published by Oxford University Press and was delivered in this trial by the University of Oxford in partnership with Elklan. The 20-week intervention consists of two 15-minute individual sessions and three 30-minute small group sessions each week, which focus on developing children’s narrative, vocabulary and listening skills, in addition to their phonological awareness and letter sound knowledge. The children selected to participate in this trial were the five children in each classroom who obtained the lowest scores on a school-administered app-based assessment of oral language skills (LanguageScreen). TAs receive two days of initial training, followed by ongoing support, while teachers also attend an initial half-day of training so that they can understand the programme and support TAs.

University of Oxford

Independent Evaluator 
RAND

Pupils	Schools	Grant
1,156	193	£526,443

Themes

- Ey Early years
- L Language and literacy



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subject
English

key stage
Early Years

EEF Summary

Research shows that oral language skills, the foundations of which are developed by age four, are strongly associated with children’s literacy, numeracy and educational attainment. However, there exists a gap between the language skills of disadvantaged children and their more advantaged counterparts. Early intervention has great potential to narrow this gap, and the Nuffield Early Language Intervention has previously demonstrated considerable promise.

Prior to this trial, different versions of the NELI programme had been tested in randomised controlled trials and demonstrated positive effects on children’s language skills. One of these trials was an EEF funded evaluation of two forms of the programme, delivered in 34 schools. The result, which had a high security rating, showed that pupils who received a 30-week version of NELI, spanning nursery and reception, made an additional 4 months’ progress in language skills, while those who received a 20-week reception version made an additional 2 months’ progress. The evaluation also followed children up 6 months later and found that the gains in language skills were maintained. This trial, however, involved a relatively small number of schools, and since that time a revised version of the 20-week reception programme has been published by Oxford University Press. The EEF, therefore,

decided to fund a larger scale effectiveness trial of the published 20-week version of the programme.

The results of this trial provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of the NELI programme. The trial involved 1,156 pupils in 193 schools, and the independent evaluation found that children receiving the NELI programme made the equivalent of 3 additional months' progress in language skills, on average, compared to children who did not receive NELI. This result has a very high security rating: 5 out of 5 on the EEF padlock scale.

In terms of secondary outcomes, children receiving the NELI programme also made an additional 2 months' progress in early word reading and an additional 5 months' progress on a teacher administered language assessment. Children with English as an additional language (EAL) receiving the NELI programme also made the equivalent of 3 additional months' progress in language compared to EAL children who did not receive NELI.

The intervention and evaluation were funded by the Education Endowment Foundation with the financial support of Intermediate Capital Group (ICG). The EEF will now explore how NELI can be provided to more schools across the country.

Research Results

Research Results

Outcome/Group	Impact - the size of the difference between Nuffield Early Language Intervention (re-grant) pupils and other pupils	Security - how confident are we in this result?
Language Skills	+3 Months' Progress 	

Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

- There were 193 schools involved in the trial
- Schools were recruited from 13 different geographical regions including Bristol, Cornwall, Durham, Essex, Hertfordshire, London, Manchester, North Tyneside, Northamptonshire, Surrey, Warwickshire and surrounds, Wolverhampton and the North West of England
- 34% of pupils in schools who received NELI were eligible for Free School Meals
- 90% of intervention schools were Good or Outstanding

Could I implement this in my school?

- TAs receive 2.5 days of training to deliver the intervention, in addition to being provided with the programme published by Oxford University Press (which includes handbooks with detailed lesson plans, picture cards, resources that can be photocopied to use in sessions, and a puppet to support session delivery).
- TAs are expected to spend a total of 5 hours per week, for 20 weeks, delivering the programme.
- NELI is available to buy from Oxford University Press, and costs £870 for the materials and training for a single form entry school, and £1,290 for a two-form entry school.

Delivered by
TAs

Participant group
Individuals

Intervention length
20 Weeks

How much will it cost?

The cost of delivering the programme is very low. The cost of NELI for a single-form entry school, where the programme is used over three years with five children per year, is £58 per child; the corresponding figure for a two-form entry school is £43 (savings are achieved in larger schools through the sharing of materials).

Cost per pupil
£43

No. of Teachers/TAs
variable

Training time per staff member
2 Days

Schools

Pupils

Key Stage

193	1,156	Early Years
Start date	End date	Type of trial
May 2017	May 2020	Effectiveness Trial

Evaluation Conclusions

1. Children who received the NELI programme made the equivalent of three additional months' progress in language skills, on average, compared to children who did not receive NELI. This result has a very high security rating.
2. Children who received the NELI programme made the equivalent of two additional months' progress in early word reading, on average, compared to children who did not receive NELI, in addition to four additional months' progress in language skills (as measured by the digital application LanguageScreen).
3. Children who received the NELI programme with English as an additional language (EAL) made the equivalent of three additional months' progress in language skills compared to EAL children who did not receive NELI.
4. Surveys and interviews from the process evaluation showed that schools believed the training and ongoing support provided was clear, useful, and sufficiently detailed for them to deliver the intervention effectively. Initial training attendance was high, and while top-up training attendance was lower, the vast majority of TA survey respondents made use of ongoing support such as telephone calls, webinars, or forums.
5. There was variation in the number of sessions that schools delivered to pupils and schools did not necessarily deliver the maximum number of sessions. Schools were more likely to deliver the group sessions compared to the individual sessions. TAs attending training and delivering a larger number of sessions was associated with better language outcomes for pupils.