

Lesson planning using AI lesson assistant, Aila - A Teacher Choices Trial

School and Teacher Information Sheet

How does using Aila to prepare lessons impact teacher workload?

Overview

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to explore different approaches to lesson planning in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 as part of EEF's 'Teacher Choices' trials programme. The aim of 'Teacher Choices' is to investigate the impact of different day-to-day pedagogical practices on pupil learning and to generate evidence that teachers can apply in the classroom.

This 'Teacher Choices' trial will explore the impact of Oak National Academy's AI-powered lesson assistant, [Aila](#). Oak National Academy launched Aila in September 2024. Aila draws on an extensive library of Oak content, created and quality assured by teachers and subject experts. Aila has been designed to support teachers with lesson planning and making resources whilst keeping the teacher, as the expert, in the driving seat. Oak National Academy built Aila using the latest research in pedagogy and cognitive science to ensure the outputs generated are pedagogically rigorous and aligned to the English national curriculum. The tool has a number of safety guardrails built into it to ensure the content produced is appropriate for UK classrooms. The tool has gone through several rounds of feedback and iteration.

The key aims of the trial are to understand the impact of using [Aila](#) on the average time that Key Stage 2 (KS2) teachers spend on lesson preparation during a ten-week period, and to assess the quality of the lesson resources produced.

Who is running the trial?

The EEF has commissioned an independent project team from NFER to implement and evaluate this trial.

What does the trial involve?

Schools will be randomly allocated to one of two groups: 1) using Aila or 2) not using Aila.

1. Aila group: teachers from schools in this group will be asked to use Aila to support their preparation of lessons and resources for their Year 3 to 6 lessons as much as they want over a 10-week period. They can also use other resources as they wish (except for accessing the Oak National Academy website for resources, see below).
2. Non-Aila group: teachers from schools in this group will be asked **not to access** the Oak National Academy website—including Aila—for any lesson or resource

preparation over a 10-week period. They can use any other sources that they routinely choose as part of their typical approach to lesson preparation.

Note on use of Oak National Academy resources: We are asking teachers in both groups to avoid accessing the Oak National Academy website during the trial. This is because the project is aiming to isolate the effect of Aila. The exception is that teachers (in both groups) may re-use any Oak National Academy resources downloaded before July 2025 if they wish.

The trial will recruit schools from May to June 2025, and the approaches will be implemented by teachers for ten weeks during the autumn term of 2025.

Eligibility

To participate, schools and teachers must meet the following criteria:

School eligibility:

- Any state-funded mainstream schools in England with Year 3 – Year 6
- Not currently encouraging use of Aila
- Willing to not use Oak National Academy website during the trial period
- Has at least one Year 3, 4, 5 or 6 teacher who will be teaching and involved in planning lessons in the autumn term 2025
- Are not participating in the EEF Writing Roots trial

Teacher eligibility:

- Teachers who have teaching and lesson planning responsibilities during the autumn term 2025, for any subjects in Year 3, 4, 5 or 6 and are willing to be part of the trial
- Teachers who share class teaching responsibilities are eligible (e.g. job-share, part time teachers)
- Teachers who plan to create at least some lesson resources from scratch in any subject during the trial period and aren't intending to use pre-prepared, paid for or well-established curriculum resources for all of their teaching
- Teachers who are not currently using Aila for lesson planning. Teachers who are already using Aila to plan lessons at least once a half term are not eligible to take part
- The use of other AI (e.g. ChatGPT) is acceptable
- Individual teachers will confirm their participation by completing an online survey in September 2025
- Teachers can use existing resources (including Oak resources, if they are already ready to be used) but they will be asked not to use Oak website to generate new resources during the autumn term

While schools are eligible to participate with as little as one teacher taking part, schools are encouraged to nominate as many KS2 teachers that meet the eligibility criteria as they would like. Each teacher that completes the diary and returns lesson resources will receive a thank you payment of up to £130 for their school, multiplying the total thank you payments the school could receive.

What will the trial involve for teachers and schools?

Schools that sign up for this trial will be allocated to one of the two randomised groups by NFER – the ‘Aila group’ or ‘non-Aila group’.

Teachers in both groups will be asked to do the following:

- Prepare their normal lessons and resources for Year 3, 4, 5, or 6 classes for ten weeks in the autumn term 2025. All teachers will be asked to avoid using the main Oak National Academy website during the trial.
- Those in the Aila group will be asked to use Aila to support their lesson preparation, while those in the non-Aila group should not use Aila.
- Complete a brief weekly online diary during the 10-week trial to provide data on the number of hours spent and the sources used in lesson planning and resource preparation.
- Complete an online survey prior to the trial (September 2025) and end of the trial (December 2025) to provide background information about the participating teachers including information on their time spent preparing lessons, attitudes to technology and their pedagogical approaches.
- Complete a follow-up survey during the Spring term (March 2026).
- Agree to NFER sharing their email with Oak Academy in order to access their anonymised Aila usage data.
- NFER will contact all teachers during the trial and invite them to share a small selection of lesson plans and lesson resources that they have used to teach during the 10-week trial period.

Additionally, a small sample of schools will be invited to take part in case studies. These schools would be visited by a DBS- checked NFER researcher once during the 10-week trial period. A case study visit will involve a teacher interview and a lesson observation. We will also invite a small number of teachers to take part in an online interview.

Please refer to the timeline below for detailed activities by dates.

What are the benefits of participating?

- Schools and teachers will be playing an active and important role in contributing to a new evidence base; an eventual evaluation report and lessons learnt will be published at the end of the trial.
- Participating teachers have the professional development opportunity to test out a new approach to lesson preparation.
- Schools that complete all the weekly diaries and share lesson plans can receive a payment of up to £130 per participating teacher at the end of the trial.
- Schools that take part in case study visits or interviews will receive an additional thank you payment for their time.

Are there any costs involved?

There are no financial costs to participate in the trial. Teachers will require a computer/device and access to an internet browser to use Aila.

How will data be used?

All data gathered during the trial will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, and GDPR and will be treated in the strictest confidence by the NFER.

No school, teacher or pupil will be named in any report arising from this work.

A School and Teacher Privacy Notice for this trial can be found [here](#).

How will the findings be used?

All teachers involved will receive a summary of the trial findings and this will also be freely available on the EEF website.

Interested in participating?

The headteacher will sign an online Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to confirm their school's participation in the trial. In the MoU they will share details of the Key Contact for the trial who will liaise with the NFER for all trial activities.

On receipt of the MoU NFER will contact schools to confirm participation and confirm next steps.

In the first week of July, NFER will request data for all teachers participating in the trial. This will be done via a template shared by NFER using the NFER secure portal. The data requested will be:

- Teacher name, contact email and their role
- Year group they will be teaching in autumn 2025

What is the timeline for this trial?

Timeline	Activities
May 2025	Recruitment to trial begins
May – June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteacher or Senior Leader to sign-up to the trial via the online MoU. • Headteacher or Senior Leader provides name and contact details of Key Contact in the school for the trial.
June – July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFER requests participating teacher data. • Key Contact shares this data via NFER's secure portal.
September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFER sends an online survey link directly to each participating teacher. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. • Participating teachers complete the online baseline survey. • Teachers who complete the baseline survey will go forward into the trial.
End of September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFER to randomly allocate schools into two groups and notify schools about their group allocation along with guidance to teachers in each group.

October – November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers follow the approach of their allocated group (i.e. using Aila to support their lesson planning or not using Aila and continuing with their usual approach to lesson planning). All teachers complete a short online diary every week. The diary will take a maximum of 5 minutes to complete each week. NFER will ask teachers to share lesson plans and lesson resources used to teach at three points throughout the 10-week period. NFER carry out case study visits and online interviews with a small selection of schools and teachers.
December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NFER will send the online endpoint survey link directly to participating teachers. 10-week trial period ends and requirement to follow allocation ends (but teachers may continue, if they wish)
March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NFER will send online follow-up survey link to all participating teachers. NFER will share teacher names, email addresses and group allocation with Oak National Academy Oak National Academy to share back anonymised Aila usage data with NFER NFER will pay thank you payment to schools when participating teachers have completed all trial activities.
Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NFER analyses the data collected and writes an evaluation report.
Autumn 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will receive the summary report from the trial

What happens if a school or teacher wants to withdraw from the trial?

Schools and teachers can withdraw from the trial and/or from their data being used in the trial at any time. However, the NFER appreciates schools' and participants' support in completing the 10-week trial and submitting data since it is very important for the validity of the results. If your school/you withdraw from the research, unless otherwise instructed, we will use any data we have collected up to that point in our analysis.

To withdraw from the research please contact NFER at KS2TeacherChoices@nfer.ac.uk.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you require any further information, please contact the NFER Team at KS2TeacherChoices@nfer.ac.uk.