



OxEd Whole Class and Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) Effectiveness Research Trial 2026-2027

Overview

OxEd is partnering with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to evaluate OxEd Whole Class and the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI).

OxEd Whole Class aims to improve Reception pupils' oral language through three weekly whole-class enrichment sessions delivered by the classroom teacher. In this trial, it will be either delivered alone or alongside [NELI](#), which provides additional small-group and individual sessions for children with the weakest language skills. NELI has gone through multiple rigorous evaluations with positive results; the most recent evaluation found that children who received NELI made four months' additional progress in language skills.

This trial offers schools the opportunity to access high-quality training, resources and support to embed evidence-informed practice. This is an exciting opportunity for your school to participate in a funded research trial of a universal, class-wide enrichment programme that draws on NELI's evidence-based principles to support strong early language development for every child.

Who is running this research trial?

The EEF is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement, by supporting schools to improve teaching and learning through better use of evidence. The EEF is funding this evaluation of OxEd Whole Class and NELI.

OxEd is a University of Oxford spinout company created to turn scientific research into practical, impactful programmes for schools. The team develops evidence-based assessments and interventions that improve educational outcomes for children. Building on research led by Professor Charles Hulme and colleagues, OxEd has designed OxEd Whole Class and NELI to support children's early language and literacy development.

NFER is an independent research organisation. They will be independently evaluating the impact of OxEd Whole Class and NELI.

How does the trial work?

The purpose of the trial is to evaluate the effectiveness of OxEd Whole Class in improving Reception pupils' oral language skills, whether delivered on its own or alongside NELI. The evaluation will assess pupil's expressive vocabulary, receptive vocabulary, listening comprehension and sentence repetition using LanguageScreen (a short digital assessment and screening tool), and will assess how accurately children use grammar and how effectively they convey meaning using the Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT).



This is a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) that will run during 2026–27 academic year.

Participating schools will be randomly assigned to one of three groups:

1. OxEd Whole Class only (intervention group)
2. OxEd Whole Class plus NELI (intervention group)
3. Control group (who will continue with usual practice)

Reception pupils who take part in the trial will be assessed with LanguageScreen in Autumn term 2026–27 by school staff (prior to schools being assigned to one of the three groups). After the randomisation, the intervention groups will receive free training, resources, and delivery support to implement the programme(s). The control group will continue with their usual teaching practice.

In Summer term 2026–27 after the programme deliveries are complete, selected pupils from all participating schools will be assessed with LanguageScreen and RAPT by NFER Test Administrators.

What do the OxEd Whole Class and NELI programmes involve?

Both programmes involve supporting Reception pupils' language development through structured activities over 20 weeks, alongside high-quality training and resources for staff. OxEd Whole Class provides whole-class language enrichment activities delivered by teachers. In randomly selected schools, OxEd Whole Class will be complemented by delivery of NELI, a targeted approach for pupils with the weakest language skills.

School leaders will:

Ensure staff have protected time in the Autumn term 2026-27 to assess participating pupils with LanguageScreen and complete online training (if they are allocated to intervention groups) and in the Spring and Summer terms to plan and deliver weekly sessions. Leaders will also nominate a key contact who will coordinate delivery and complete research activities.

Teachers and teaching support staff will:

Complete LanguageScreen with all pupils participating in the trial (approximately 7-10 minutes per pupil) to assess their oral language skills at the start of the trial in the Autumn term 2026-27.

Teachers will:

Complete an online training course (estimated 8–10 hours) in the Autumn term and deliver three 20-minute whole-class language enrichment sessions each week for 20 weeks in Spring and Summer terms of 2026–27. Whole Class sessions use interactive activities to build vocabulary and narrative skills. Training is delivered online and is fully flexible, allowing staff to complete modules at their own pace alongside existing commitments.



In schools selected to deliver OxEd Whole Class plus NELI, teaching support staff will:

Complete an online training course (estimated 8-10 hours) and deliver three 25-minute small group and two 15-minute individual sessions per week for six pupils in each class selected by NFER on the basis of their LanguageScreen scores and suitability for small group sessions.

All pupils in the intervention groups will:

Take part in interactive activities as part of OxEd Whole Class sessions designed to develop listening, vocabulary, and storytelling skills. In schools randomly selected to deliver OxEd Whole Class and NELI, six pupils in each class will receive additional sessions to reinforce and extend their learning.

Summary of responsibilities:

Assigned group	Teacher responsibilities	Teaching support staff responsibilities
OxEd Whole Class	Deliver three 20-minute sessions each week for 20 weeks.	None – continue with normal practice.
OxEd Whole Class and NELI	Deliver three 20-minute sessions each week for 20 weeks.	Deliver three 25-minute small group sessions and two 15-minute individual sessions each week for 20 weeks.
Control	None – continue with normal practice.	None – continue with normal practice.

In addition, all schools will be required to complete the following research trial activities:

- Share all Reception pupils’ data and relevant staff data securely with the evaluation team (NFER).
- Distribute parent information leaflets.
- Complete staff surveys at baseline and at endpoint.
- Support the completion of endpoint assessments for a sample of selected Reception pupils, to be carried out by an NFER Test Administrator in July 2027. Schools will be asked to nominate a staff member to facilitate school visits and provide a suitable space to complete the assessments.
- Communicate with the evaluation team (NFER) and delivery team (OxEd) at key points as outlined in the trial timeline (see below).

Schools in both intervention groups will also be required to:

- Complete session delivery logs recording pupil attendance.



- A small number of intervention schools will be invited to act as (anonymous) case studies for the evaluation, involving participation in a session observation and staff interview. Participation in this element is completely voluntary.
- At one year follow-up schools may be asked to complete a short online survey.

What are the benefits of participating?

By taking part, your school is contributing to a robust evaluation that will help build evidence on what works to support children's early speech, language and communication skills and literacy development. This means that your school will play an important role in shaping future practice and policy to support better outcomes for all pupils.

Schools in the two intervention groups will receive:

- Free access to high-quality training and resources to deliver OxEd Whole Class (and NELI where applicable).
- Up to £500 per class in recognition of their contribution to research, this payment includes:
 - Staff time to administer LanguageScreen at baseline (£150 per class).
 - Staff time to support NFER test administrator visits for endpoint assessments (£150 per class).
 - Submission of session delivery logs: £100 per class for those delivering OxEd Whole Class only, or £200 per class for those delivering OxEd Whole Class and NELI.
- Ongoing delivery support through webinars and an online implementation hub.
- Assessment feedback reports at the end of the evaluation.
- Access to the published evaluation report on the EEF website at the end of the trial.

Schools in the control group will receive:

- £300 per class in recognition of their contribution to research, this payment includes:
 - Staff time to administer LanguageScreen at baseline (£150 per class).
 - Staff time to support NFER test administrator visits for endpoint assessments (£150 per class).
- An additional £500 per school (which can either be financial payment or be used towards the purchase the OxEd Whole Class programme so that all schools can deliver it after the trial).
- Assessment feedback reports at the end of the evaluation.
- Access to the published evaluation report on the EEF website at the end of the trial.

Eligibility

To participate, schools must meet the following criteria:

- Be a state-funded mainstream primary or infant school in England.
- Have at least one Reception class (pupils aged 4–5 years). We recommend that no more than two Reception classes take part in the trial. If your school would like additional



Education
Endowment
Foundation



OxEd
& Assessment



NFER
National Foundation for
Educational Research

classes involved, please indicate this on your school EOI so it can be discussed in more detail before your school joins the trial.

- Have a minimum of 25 pupils (aged 4-5 years) per class in Reception during academic year 2025–26 (schools with slightly fewer pupils may still be considered and placed on a reserve list).
- Be able to confirm availability of a teacher to deliver the OxEd Whole Class programme and at least one additional teaching support staff member available to support participating class/es (in case the school is randomly allocated to deliver OxEd Whole Class plus NELI).
- Not currently delivering NELI or OxEd Whole Class to Reception pupils in 2025–26.
- Not planning to take part in any other EEF-funded Reception trials in 2026–27.

Are there any costs involved?

Schools will **not** be required to make a direct monetary contribution to participate in the trial. All training and programme resources are provided free of charge.

However, schools should plan for:

- Staff time to complete baseline LanguageScreen assessments, online training and session delivery.
- Cover arrangements if training occurs during working hours. Training is flexible, online and self-paced and scheduled to take place over three weeks in mid-November/early December requiring 8-10 hours of staff time.
- Weekly planning and preparation time - kept to a minimum through ready-to-use resources and session plans and not expected to exceed typical workload. Schools delivering NELI should ensure staff delivering sessions also have time to schedule and prepare NELI sessions.

How will data be used?

OxEd and NFER will collect data from participating schools, staff, and pupils to evaluate the effect of the programme. This includes baseline and endpoint assessments, teacher surveys, and session delivery logs.

The data will be used to understand how the intervention was implemented, measure its effectiveness, and inform future research and practice. Findings will be reported at group level only - individual schools, staff, or pupils will not be identified in any published report.

All data will be treated securely and confidentially in accordance with UK Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Personal data will be pseudonymised for analysis and archived for further research after the evaluation.

- [OxEd Privacy Notice](#)
- [NFER Privacy Notice for the evaluation](#)
- [EEF Data Archive Privacy Notice](#)

What is the timeline for this trial?

Time	Event
February 2026 – June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested schools complete EOI (Expression of Interest) • OxEd follows up with EOIs and determines eligibility • Eligible schools sign up to the trial (Headteacher signs a Memorandum of Understanding) • Schools nominate a key contact for research trial • OxEd provide schools with parent information letters, schools circulate a letter to parents
July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFER contacts schools who have signed up to the trial, providing details of evaluation activities that will take place from September 2026 onwards • Schools who are able to share information about their incoming Reception pupils, share data with NFER including name, date of birth, class and gender of participating pupils
September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools share information about all 4-5-year-old children enrolled in Reception with NFER including name, date of birth, class, gender • All schools confirm information about Reception class teachers (teacher name, email address, class name and role) and teaching support staff (name, email address and class)
October – Early November 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception class teachers complete an online survey about usual approaches to supporting language development, previous experience of NELL and confidence around supporting early language development • NFER shares guidance on how to complete baseline LanguageScreen assessment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools complete baseline LanguageScreen assessment with pupils in all participating Reception classes
November – December 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are notified of which group they have been randomly allocated to (OxEd Whole Class only, OxEd Whole Class plus NELI or Control group (business as usual)) Intervention schools receive access to LanguageScreen results. Schools allocated to the OxEd Whole Class plus NELI group also receive the list of pupils who are allocated to receive NELI. Staff in intervention schools complete OxEd Whole Class training (online and asynchronous); additional staff member completes NELI online training (for schools allocated to the OxEd Whole Class plus NELI group)
January – June 2027	<p>Schools in the OxEd Whole Class only group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deliver OxEd Whole Class (supported by OxEd), and complete weekly attendance registers for OxEd Whole Class sessions a small number of intervention schools will be invited to take part in (anonymous) NFER case study visits <p>Schools in the OxEd Whole Class plus NELI group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deliver OxEd Whole Class and NELI (supported by OxEd), and complete weekly attendance registers for OxEd Whole Class and NELI sessions a small number of intervention schools will be invited to take part in) NFER case study visits (optional)
March – July 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools provide UPN and FSM data for selected pupils All schools facilitate visit/s from an NFER test administrator to administer LanguageScreen and RAPT with selected children Control schools complete staff survey about approaches to supporting language development and CPD during the trial period, as well as their confidence around supporting early language development Intervention schools complete staff surveys around their experiences of the training and programme delivery, as well as their confidence around supporting early language development
September 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools receive assessment feedback reports



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All schools receive incentive payments for completing relevant trial activities, and OxEd liaises with control settings on additional incentive payment, or ordering OxEd Whole Class for the school to deliver in the next academic year
June – July 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Possible follow-up survey takes place (for schools in the two intervention groups).

Interested in participating?

- [Register your interest](#)
- [Book a Discovery Call](#)
- [Find out more information about OxEd Whole Class](#)

Contact wholeclass@oxedandassessment.com with questions related to the programme.

Contact NFERWholeClass@nfer.ac.uk with questions related to the evaluation.