

Early Talk Boost – research project

Information for parents and carers



Dear parent/carer,

We are writing to let you know that your child's nursery is taking part in an evaluation of Early Talk Boost. This is a programme designed by Speech and Language UK to help children with their talking and understanding of words.

- The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is funding the evaluation.
- The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is the independent evaluator. This means that they will collect and analyse information to understand whether the programme is making a difference to children's language skills.
- Speech and Language UK will deliver the training and provide Early Talk Boost programme support to some settings.

This letter is being sent to parents and carers of all children who:

- will be attending the nursery as of September 2025,
- will be aged between 3 and 4 during the 2025 – 2026 academic year, and
- are considered by the nursery staff to be suited to the programme.

This letter provides more information about the project and what it will involve for your child. The nursery is sending you this letter on behalf of NFER.

What is Early Talk Boost?

Early Talk Boost is designed to help children who need some extra support to catch up with their peers in terms of key areas of the early years curriculum, including Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Mathematics. The Early Talk Boost programme has been designed by Speech and Language UK specialist teachers and speech and language therapists, with the help of early years practitioners and parents. It is informed by strong evidence and has demonstrated early promise in a study that showed impact on children's ability to talk and understand words.

The programme is 9 weeks long and involves three 15–20-minute sessions per week. The programme is usually delivered to groups of 6–8 children per setting. In this trial, we will ask settings to run the intervention from January–June 2026 with at least two different groups of children aged 3–4 years. Training and materials to run the groups are provided by Speech and Language UK.

What will the evaluation involve?

This evaluation aims to measure the impact of Early Talk Boost on children's oral language skills. The evaluation uses a randomised controlled trial (RCT) design. This means your child's nursery will be randomly allocated to one of the two following groups:

- 1) The Intervention group, which will use the Early Talk Boost programme; or
- 2) The Control group, which will continue with their usual practice.

What will the research involve for my child?

- Your child's data (full name, date of birth and gender) will be securely shared with NFER.
- A practitioner in your child's setting will assess your child's oral language skills using an online assessment called LanguageScreen. It is an app-based assessment used to evaluate young children's oral language skills, including vocabulary, sentence comprehension, and narrative abilities. This will take about 10 minutes and will be administered in November 2025. The results will then be securely shared with NFER.
- If your child's nursery is allocated to the intervention group, your child may be selected to attend 3 nursery-based group sessions per week for 9 weeks.
- After the programme delivery is completed, in summer term 2026, NFER will select a sample of children to take part in follow-up assessments. Your child may be selected as part of this sample. If selected, they will complete two assessments with an NFER Test Administrator: LanguageScreen and Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT). RAPT is a paper-based assessment that will involve showing your child 10 picture cards and asking them a question about each one. Children's audio responses to RAPT will be recorded for transcription purposes only. They **will be deleted** once the marking is complete.
- A practitioner in your child's nursery will complete the FOCUS-34 measure about your child's social interactions.

If your child's setting is in the intervention group and agrees to take part in further research, an NFER researcher may visit to observe an Early Talk Boost session. During the visit, your child might be asked to point to a smiley face to show how they felt about the session.

Further information about the evaluation, and what it involves can be found [here](#).

What are the benefits and risks of my child taking part?

We do not anticipate any risks or harm to the practitioners or children participating in this study. This study has been approved by NFER's research ethics committee and NFER has safeguarding protocols in place to protect children during the research activities. By participating in this study, your child is helping us to understand if Early Talk Boost improves language skills, enhance programme delivery, and strengthen evidence on what works in early years education.



How will NFER use and protect the data collected?

NFER has robust procedures in place to make sure that we comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which sets out how data should be collected and stored securely.

After the report is published, NFER will submit linked child data with setting and practitioner details to the EEF archive. For further details about how we will collect, use, and protect personal data collected during this trial in the Parent/carer privacy notice available [here](#).

How will the findings be used?

The findings from this study will be published so that settings can read about it. NFER's independent research evaluation report will be published in May 2027, and will be available on the Education Endowment Foundation's website: www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

No setting, practitioner or child will be named in the report, and we will not include any other information that may mean someone else could identify them. No identifiable children's data will be made public. The children's assessment scores from LanguageScreen will be shared with their setting at the end of the evaluation.

What happens if I want to withdraw my child from the trial?

We hope that you consent to your child's participation in the trial and for their data to be shared with us. If you would prefer that your child's data is not shared, please complete the 'Parent/Carer Withdrawal Form' below and return it to your child's nursery within the next two weeks. The nursery will then ensure that your child's data is not shared as part of the trial.

You can also withdraw your child's data from being used in this research at any time after the evaluation has started and up until July 2026, when the data will be analysed. To do this you should complete the form below and share it with your child's nursery, they will inform us of your request.

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Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact: ETBtrial@nfer.ac.uk.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. Please keep it for future reference.

Withdrawal Form

Please only return this form to your child's nursery if you **do NOT wish** for your child's data to be shared, stored, archived and used for the Early Talk Boost evaluation.

☐ I do **NOT** want data about my child to be collected, stored, archived and used as part of the Early Talk Boost evaluation.

Your Child's Full Name

Setting Name

Your Full Name

Your Signature

Parent / Guardian (delete as appropriate)

Date

Please return the completed form to your child's setting within two weeks of receiving this information sheet.