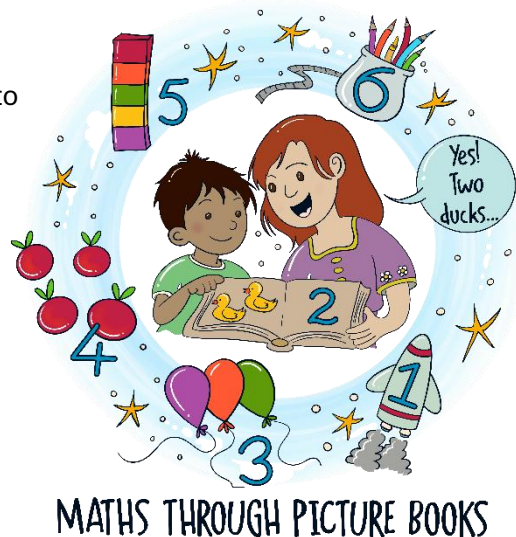


Maths Through Picture Books

Overview

[East London Research School](#) is partnering with the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) and [IFF Research](#) to evaluate **Maths Through Picture Books**. The programme aims to equip Reception teachers and teaching assistants with the skills and knowledge to deliver a small group session (out of class) for children who do not yet have a secure grasp of foundational number skills and concepts, using shared book reading. The trial will assess the impact of Maths Through Picture Books on children's early number attainment and the impact of professional development on educator's early maths beliefs, confidence, knowledge and levels of maths anxiety.



This is an exciting opportunity for your school to take part in the evaluation of a promising approach designed to improve children's mathematical development.

What does the programme involve?

Maths Through Picture Books is a 10-week programme for a targeted group of 5 Reception children who need additional support to develop a secure understanding of numbers. The [EEF Improving Mathematics in the Early Years and KS1](#) guidance report highlights evidence that picture books can be particularly effective for teaching mathematics. When used well, they offer meaningful and engaging contexts for exploring mathematical concepts; however, their impact depends largely on how the books are shared and discussed with children.

The programme trains Reception teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) to use shared book reading to actively engage children and promote sustained, high-quality conversations about mathematical ideas using carefully selected picture books.

TAs – supported by teachers – deliver small-group, maths-focused shared reading sessions twice a week for 10 weeks. Each 15-minute session aims to:

- develop children's secure understanding of numbers.
- increase children's enjoyment of and motivation towards maths.

For schools randomly assigned to implement the programme, it will run from February to May 2027. Participants will have access to online resources and telephone support from an expert mentor. Training includes a blend of face-to-face and online sessions, with the Reception

teacher and TA attending 2 days in-person training, 1 hour long online module and 3 one-hour sessions with their mentor. This will equip teachers and TAs with:

- Improved understanding of how children learn about numbers.
- The knowledge and skills to use picture books interactively using specific elements of 'The ShREC approach', which promotes conversational responsiveness.
- The knowledge and skills to engage a small group of children in sustained multi-turn conversations about numbers using picture books.

What are the benefits of participating?

By participating in the trial, all schools will help understand the impact of the programme on children's maths attainment and contribute to the wider education evidence base that informs efforts to improve outcomes for all children. The evaluation report will be publicly accessible on the EEF website upon project completion.

Schools randomly assigned to the control or teaching-as-usual group will receive a £300 thank you payment for completing the evaluation activities, plus an additional payment if optionally taking part as a case study school. Schools randomly assigned to implement the programme will receive subsidised professional development training for their Reception teams, delivered by East London Research School and a set of 9 mathematical picture books for every Reception class taking part.

Eligibility

To participate, schools must meet the following criteria:

- Be a state-funded mainstream primary school
- Be willing to select 6 children likely to benefit from the programme from each Reception class
- Be in the Southeast or East of England and within travelling distance of our in-person training in London or Cambridge
- Not be taking part in any other Reception EEF projects in the same time period

Who is running the project?

Sheringham Nursery School and Children's Centre in Newham, East London, is home to [East London Research School](#) (ELRS) and [A Brighter Start – East London's Early Years Stronger Practice Hub](#). ELRS is one of 33 Research Schools in the UK – the only Maintained Nursery School in the network. We have been a Research School since 2019 and lead the way in the use of evidence-informed practice. ELRS has significant experience of developing and delivering effective professional development programmes. ELRS have designed Maths Through Picture Books and will lead delivery of the programme.

[IFF Research](#) is a UK research agency established in 1965, providing robust, independent and high-quality evaluations across the education sector. They will independently evaluate the impact of Maths Through Picture Books to ensure objective and trustworthy findings.

How does the trial work?

The purpose of the trial is to evaluate the impact of the Maths Through Picture Books programme on children’s number attainment. To do this, schools will be randomly allocated to either teaching-as-usual (control) or the programme group. The programme group receives training and delivers the programme to children whilst the teaching-as-usual group continues with their normal practice.

<p>Preparation for the trial</p> <p>October 2026 - January 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participating schools will nominate six pupils from each Reception class involved in Maths Through Picture Books. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Five pupils will take part in the trial; ○ One pupil will be identified as a reserve and will replace any pupil who withdraws before the programme begins; ○ ELRS will provide support to schools with the pupil selection. • The evaluation team will carry out short assessments with the 6 children before programme starts • Schools will be randomly assigned to either teaching-as-usual or the programme group • Staff in both groups will be asked to complete surveys by the evaluation team
<p>Training</p> <p>February - May 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools assigned to the programme group will begin their training in person the week beginning 1st February 2027
<p>Final evaluation activities</p> <p>May - July 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evaluation team will carry out short assessments with the same 6 children after the programme ends • Staff in both groups will be asked to complete surveys by the evaluation team • Staff in a small number of participating schools will be invited to take part in voluntary in-depth telephone interviews lasting approximately 30–40 minutes

Schools will need to:

- Commit their Reception class with 1 teacher/TA pair (or at least 2 classes – 2 teacher/TA pairs – in the case of multiple form entry schools) to take part.
- Identify 6 children from each participating Reception class. This will involve a short task to find out the children’s knowledge of the meaning of number words and counting in combination with the teacher’s professional judgement.
- Hand out parent information leaflets
- Provide contact details for the Headteacher, and all Reception teachers and TAs involved in the programme
- Communicate with the evaluation team (IFF Research) and the delivery team (ELRS).

The evaluation activities carried out by the IFF Research include:

- Short assessments with the 6 children at the beginning of the programme using the Early Years Toolbox.
- Random assignment to either the programme or teaching-as-usual once all baseline assessments are complete.
- In programme schools: Reception teachers, TAs, and the maths/EY lead will complete a baseline and endpoint practitioner survey; the headteacher will complete a school-level survey at endline. A small number of schools will be invited to take part in interviews.
- In teaching-as-usual schools: teachers, TAs, will complete a baseline and end-point practitioner survey; the headteacher will complete a school-level survey at endline.
- Short assessments with the same 6 children at the end of the programme using Early Years Toolbox.

Are there any costs involved?

Schools in the programme group will be asked to contribute £100 per teacher/TA pair towards the cost of the training. Before making a commitment to take part, schools should be aware that they will need to cover Teachers and TAs to be released to attend the training and support. The teacher and TA – from each Reception class taking part – will be required to attend 2 days in person training (either in London or Cambridge), 1 hour-long online module and 3 one-hour sessions with their mentor. The TA will also need a minimum of 15 minutes each week for professional reflection.

Programme schools will need an audio recording device like a tablet or dictaphone. This will be used to record the sessions and support structured reflections on each of the sessions. These recordings are only used for professional reflection within the school and are not part of the evaluation.

How will the data be used?

The data collected by IFF Research will be stored securely and treated with the utmost confidentiality. All personal information will be held on password-protected systems in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

IFF Research and ELRS are the data controller for this project and processes data under legitimate interests. Personal data will only be used to carry out this evaluation and will never be shared in a way that identifies individual schools, staff, or children.

All data will be anonymised or pseudonymised for analysis and reporting. Analyses will be conducted by Accredited Researchers (under the Digital Economy Act), meaning they are trained in data confidentiality and listed on a public register. Your school, staff members, and children will **not** be named or identifiable in any reports or publications resulting from this research. For more details please refer to the privacy notice at

https://www.iffresearch.com/ic/docz/13988/Privacy_Maths_Through_Picture_Books.pdf

Findings from this evaluation will be published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and shared with other trusted organisations such as the Department for Education and the Office for National Statistics to help improve educational practice and policy.

What is the timeline for this project?

Schools express an interest and sign an MoU	Deadline 14th July 2026
Selection of 6 children per Reception class by teacher	w/b 19th October – w/b 2nd November 2026
Baseline assessment of the 6 identified children by the Evaluation team	w/b 16th November – w/b 11th January 2027
Schools hear their allocation to teaching as usual (control) or implement the programme (intervention) groups	w/b 18th January – w/b 25th January 2027
Training for the teachers and TAs in the intervention group	w/b 1st February 2027
Programme delivery to children	22nd February – 14th May 2027
Endline assessment of the 6 identified children by the Evaluation team	w/b 17th May – w/b 19th July 2027
Control schools receive incentive payments	July – Sept 2027
Evaluation report published	January 2028

Interested in participating?

For more information and to register your interest please visit

<https://sheringham-nur.org.uk/maths-through-picture-books/>

If you have any questions, please email MTPB_delivery@sheringham-nur.newham.sch.uk

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