

# The Education Endowment Foundation 2025-2035 Strategy

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# 01. Our purpose



The EEF is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. We do this by supporting early years settings, schools, and colleges to use evidence to make a difference.

**The EEF's vision is a world where a child's family income does not limit their educational outcomes, choices, or life chances.**

By the time a child born into a low-income family starts school, they are already less likely to meet expected levels of language, communication, and physical development. These attainment gaps widen through the phases of education, often having a profound impact on their opportunities and lives.

**Our mission is to support the education sector to transform outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people by harnessing the power of evidence on what works in practice.**

We make sure early years providers, schools, and colleges have - and can use well - accurate, accessible, and actionable evidence to improve practice and boost outcomes, particularly for economically disadvantaged children and young people from 2 to 19 years.

02.

# Our foundations

The EEF is an independent charity with an endowment from government with the objective to:

**“Build a high-quality evidence base on ‘what works’ in education practice - and support early years providers, schools, and colleges to access and effectively mobilise this evidence to raise attainment of disadvantaged 2-to-19-year-olds.”**

There are many factors that contribute to the attainment gap - not least the direct, damaging impact of child poverty. Tackling this gap will require concerted efforts on multiple fronts - but great education is one of the most powerful levers we have to improve outcomes for economically disadvantaged children.

Evidence shows that economically disadvantaged children and young people benefit disproportionately from the experience of high-quality teaching; and that the quality of teaching can be transformed when educators understand and apply the evidence on what works in practice. Economically disadvantaged children may also need additional, targeted academic and wider support to close the attainment gap - and it is therefore vital that this support is as effective as possible.

Our role is therefore to support this: providing practitioners with - and enabling them to use - evidence on high-quality teaching and focused, additional interventions. This evidence, both in itself and through effective targeting of related support, can directly improve outcomes for economically disadvantaged children, while also supporting improvement across the wider system.



The EEF therefore has three important roles:

Evidence Synthesis • Evidence Generation • Evidence Mobilisation

## We summarise evidence

We look at the global evidence base to find out what we already know about improving teaching and learning.

## We build evidence

We develop, evaluate, and scale-up programmes and approaches that aim to boost outcomes for children and young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

## We put evidence to use

We help the education sector to use evidence in ways that really make a difference.

Through this activity, we support practitioners across early years, schools, and colleges to use **evidence** that is:

## Accurate

Our evidence and guidance is reliable and trusted because it is grounded in the most robust and innovative research methods.



## Accessible

Our evidence and guidance is inspiring and relevant, meeting direct and pressing sector needs, and able to be clearly and easily used by practitioners.



## Actionable

Our evidence, guidance, and mobilisation activity is a catalyst for change, supporting the sector to improve teaching and learning through effective implementation.

# 03. The EEF story so far

Since its inception in 2011, the EEF has established itself as a key part of the education system. We have:

**Pioneered approaches to conducting rigorous research in education settings** - ensuring we generate robust findings that provide reliable recommendations for practice, while also being able to explain the impacts we see.

**Normalised participation in robust research** by English schools - and made progress towards this in the early years and 16-19 sectors, while also being able to explain what has driven the impacts we see.

**Identified and scaled up effective solutions** - finding clear examples of well-evidenced interventions with significant positive impact for economically disadvantaged children that are now being used across the country.

**Become a trusted voice in the sector** - with widely used resources and a national Research Schools Network that supports schools to embed evidence-informed practice.

**Influenced and shaped evidence-informed policies** - including ensuring the national training and professional development offer for teachers and leaders (ECF and NPQs) is underpinned by robust research evidence.

**Supported the development of a wider learning system** - building relationships with education researchers, funders, and other organisations - local, national, and international - in support of a shared endeavour to harness evidence to improve outcomes.



2011

EEF established with a £125 million endowment from the Department for Education  
Initial version of the Teaching and Learning Toolkit published  
First trials of high-potential programmes launched

2013

Full digital version of the Teaching and Learning Toolkit launched

2014

Remit expands to three- and four-year olds  
Early Years Toolkit launched  
First international partnership formed with Australia

2015

First EEF guidance report published, on effective use of teaching assistants  
Research Schools Network launched to support schools to use evidence to improve teaching and learning locally

2016

100<sup>th</sup> research trial commissioned

2020

EEF takes on evidence guardianship role, providing evidence to shape national teacher development programmes (ECF, NPQs)  
Support of COVID-19 recovery response, including rapid evidence summaries and resources to support schools, scale up of Nuffield Early Language Intervention, and establishment of National Tutoring Programme

2022

Government re-endows EEF with a further £136m  
Remit expands again to include work with two- to three-year-olds

2024

Work extends into the 16–19 sector  
EEF Exchange launched to develop a community of practitioners  
Promising Programmes launched to highlight programmes with the strongest impact

## Our resources are widely used and trusted

**7 in 10**

senior leaders tell us they use the Teaching & Learning Toolkit to inform their decision-making.

**7 in 10**

headteachers tell us they use & trust EEF guidance.

**9 in 10**

primary schools found EEF resources useful during the pandemic.

**2m**

users of the EEF website each year.

**1.3m**

resources downloaded from the EEF website each year.

**434k**

users access our Toolkits each year.

## We have built the evidence and put it to use

**17k & 500k**

schools and children reached through national scale-up of EEF Promising Programmes.

**8 in 10**

schools in England have taken part in an EEF project evaluation.

**2m**

children involved in EEF projects since 2011.

**300+**

evaluations commissioned since 2011.

**2 in 5**

teachers have taken part in national professional development courses (ECF, NPQs) built on EEF-backed evidence.

**7k**

schools have been involved in professional development led by Research Schools.

04.

# Our 2035 strategy

Going further

Our work since 2011 has put us in a strong and internationally unique position. But as we move into this next strategy phase, the scale and urgency of our task remains a defining societal challenge. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and wider societal challenges, improvements in outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people have stalled, and the gap between them and their more affluent peers has widened in comparison to pre-pandemic levels.

**We need to go further to support practitioners and settings - themselves facing significant challenges - to harness the power of evidence to improve teaching and learning and deliver our shared ambition to transform outcomes for children and young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.**

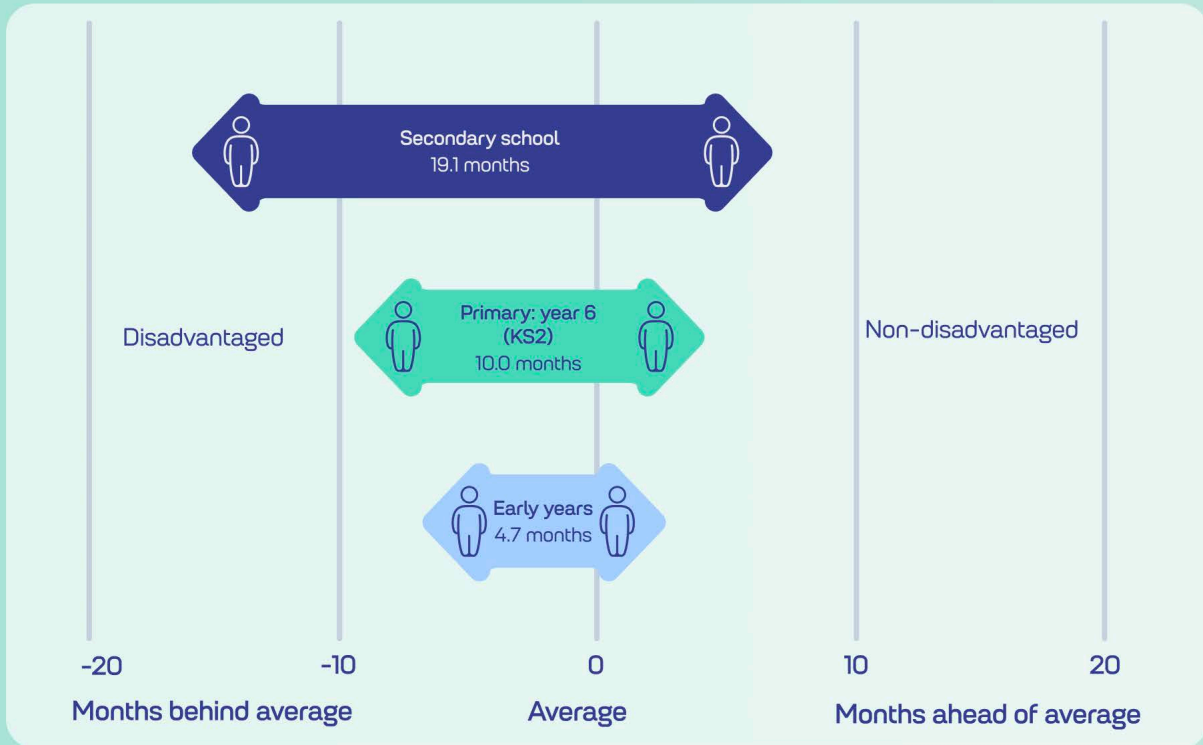
This strategy sets out how we will do this. It sets out a vision for the EEF in 2035, alongside specific priorities and actions for the next three years that will take us towards this.



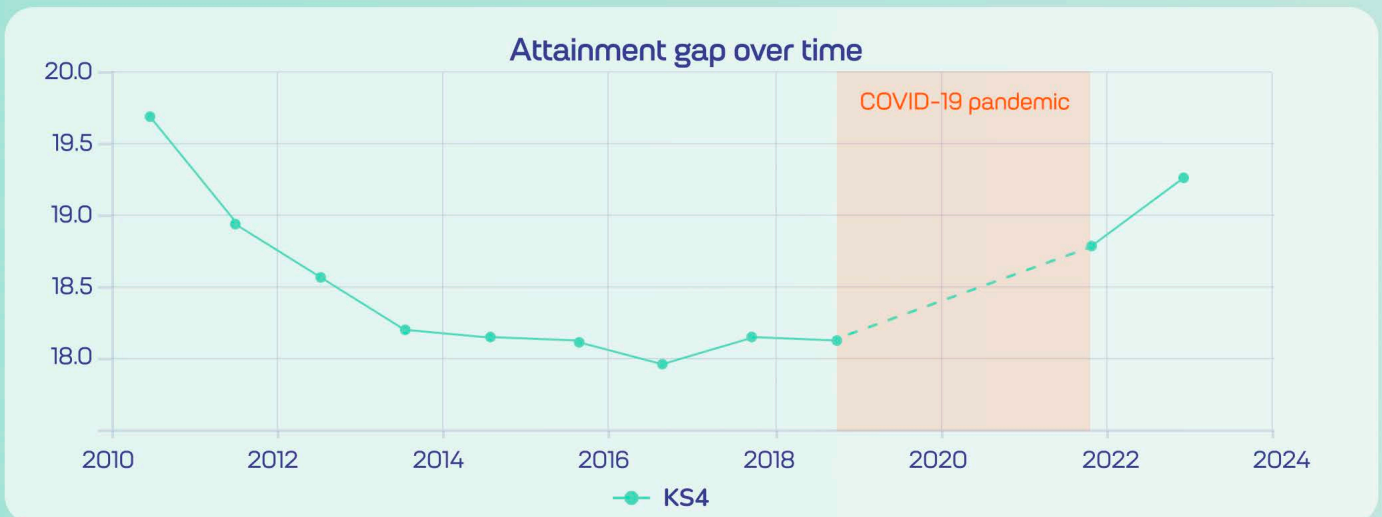
# Outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people

By the time a child born into a low-income family starts school, they are already less likely to meet expected levels of language, communication, and physical development. These attainment gaps widen through the phases of education, often having a profound impact on their opportunities and lives.

2 in 10 pupils with low attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 went on to achieve a pass in both English and maths GCSEs.<sup>1</sup> Young people who do not achieve this level are twice as likely to be NEET as those who secure five GCSEs.<sup>2</sup>



The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrowed steadily from 2011 to 2017, but progress then stalled. The gap widened again during the pandemic and remains above pre-COVID levels (Education Policy Institute, Annual Report, 2024).



1. Explore education statistics, Gov.uk 22/23, 23/24.  
 2. Impetus (2019, 2025) Youth Jobs Gap.

# 2035 ambitions

The EEF's overarching ambition is that by 2035, outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people will have improved significantly and the gap between these outcomes and those of their more affluent peers will have substantially narrowed.

This overarching goal is a shared endeavour for many organisations across the education system and wider society. We are also setting specific ambitions directly connected to the EEF's own mission and foundations:

**Summarising evidence:** by 2035, the EEF's body of high quality, relevant resources will be reaching all schools and the vast majority of early years settings and 16-19 providers - and this reach will be higher in those with greater numbers of economically disadvantaged children and young people.

**Building evidence:** by 2035, the EEF will have identified a substantial body of scalable evidence with demonstrable positive impact for economically disadvantaged children and young people, with the rigour of our research matched by its innovation, timeliness, and relevance.

**Putting evidence to use:** by 2035, the EEF's mobilisation activity will be effectively supporting evidence-informed practice change at scale in all sectors, making a direct difference to improving outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people.

# Strengthening our approach

To achieve our ambitions we need to go further, working in partnership across the sector to overcome shared barriers and address a number of specific challenges to maximising our own effectiveness:

- 1. We need to ensure that our activity is more fully informed by, and relevant to, practice** - enabling us to effectively identify the most practice-relevant questions and address the barriers practitioners face to using evidence effectively. This is particularly important in building recognition, use, and trust in the early years and 16-19 sectors where EEF activity is newer.
- 2. We need to better answer the most important questions** - based on both relevance to practice and potential to improve outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people. The often longer-term nature of robust evidence generation can present challenges on the timeliness of the findings. Similarly, we need to do more to identify findings with clear routes to widespread use and impact at scale - including moving beyond evaluations of programmes to also generating actionable evidence on effective day-to-day approaches and practices.
- 3. We need to understand how EEF evidence can be used to have the biggest impact on practice.** The widespread evidence use the EEF has established in schools - and is building in early years and 16-19 - is internationally unique. However, we do not yet know enough about how this evidence is used - nor how to improve this. Addressing this is vital if we are to better support effective implementation and counteract the risk of superficial use - where, at worst, 'evidence' can be merely a buzz-word.
- 4. We need to better target our resources and activities to directly meet user need.** The EEF now hosts an unrivalled body of robust and actionable evidence. But with this comes challenges of coherence and navigability - particularly for practitioners and other partners across three sectors. Similarly, overcoming the significant challenges of effective implementation requires enhanced, co-ordinated activity to drive change.

# 05. Priorities

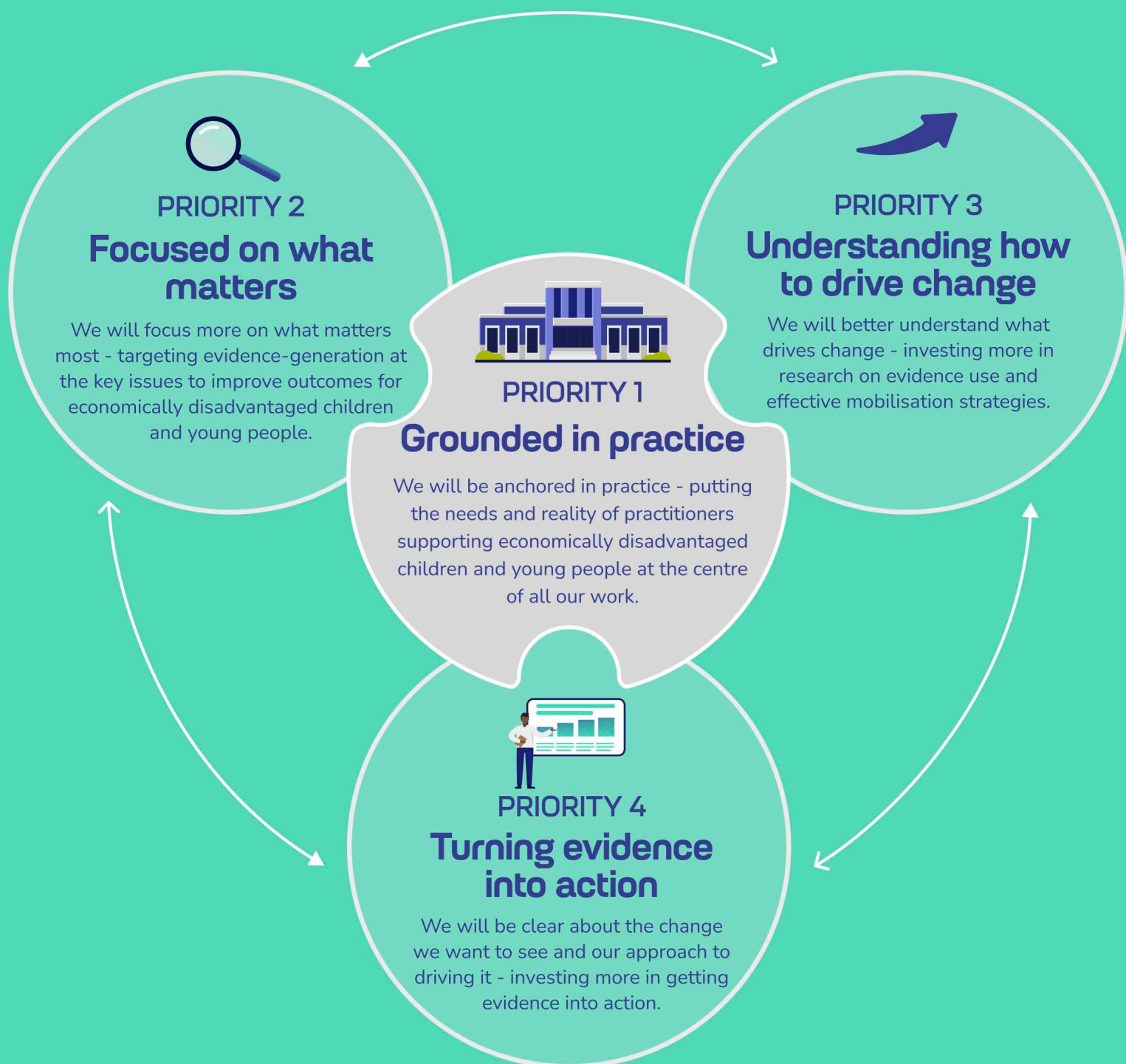


To address these challenges and make progress towards achieving our 2035 vision, we have identified four priorities to drive our activity over the next three years, which will then be reviewed and updated.

The priorities apply across all of our work – although importantly, with different emphases in different sectors, reflecting the stage of activity. For example, the pivot to enhanced mobilisation will look different in relation to schools (with a significantly more developed underpinning evidence base) than in the early years and then again in the 16-19 sector (where the evidence base needs substantial development).



# Four connected priorities



# Priority 1

## Grounded in practice



We will be anchored in practice - putting the needs and reality of practitioners supporting economically disadvantaged children and young people at the centre of all our work.

To generate and support practitioners (both leaders and teachers) to use evidence that is accurate, accessible, and actionable, we will ensure our work is directly focused on the needs, pressures, and opportunities they experience.

We have taken significant steps in this direction - including more targeted approaches to evidence generation. But we want to go further, drawing on practitioner insight and input across all of our activity.





We will:

- **Revise our decision-making process on what we fund to give practice experience and knowledge a more central role.** This enhanced practitioner input will help to shape both the research areas we prioritise and the specific projects we choose to commission.
- **Build our engagement activity - increasing and co-ordinating access to practice voices.** We will develop the reach and diversity of our engagement activity, alongside our ability to embed the insights into our work - including, crucially, testing and refining EEF resources.
- **Establish a rapid response function to meet pressing sector and policymaker priorities.** This will enable us to support practitioners and policymakers with timely, robust, and actionable guidance and evidence in mission aligned areas - for example, SEND or the use of technology and AI.
- **Work intensively with early years and 16-19 sectors as we develop dedicated plans to support activity in new, mission critical phases.** This is particularly vital in navigating the EEF's newer role in supporting practitioners in these phases - helping to ensure our evidence and guidance meet their specific needs.
- **Enhance input from, and direct collaboration with, early years settings, schools, and colleges** - opening up consistent, structured opportunities for this expertise to inform and permeate EEF activity and for EEF staff to invest time learning directly from practitioners, ensuring that understanding their needs is second nature across the organisation.

# Priority 2

## Focused on what matters



We will focus more on what matters most - targeting evidence generation at the key issues to improve outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people.

The EEF's research work is central to our mission, ensuring we have the right knowledge to support practitioners and feed our mobilisation efforts. We have developed a strong understanding of how to conduct rigorous and relevant education research, identifying actionable findings and a number of well evidenced interventions that have been scaled.

Now we want to go further, maintaining this rigour while focusing our research on the most important and timely issues, harnessing innovation in design and methods to ensure timely and relevant results, balancing long-term priorities with the flexibility to respond quickly to emerging challenges.





We will:

- **Publish a clear, three-year plan on the research themes and topics we intend to prioritise.** This strategic research agenda will be underpinned by both research and practice insight to identify the most important issues in supporting economically disadvantaged children and young people - and will enable us to align with the priorities of others to go further and faster in partnership. The research agenda will be cyclical so that we can return to themes to fill remaining evidence gaps. Importantly, it will consider routes to scale from the outset, ensuring our evidence generation is explicitly designed to feed mobilisation.
- **Focus on effective day-to-day teaching approaches and practices, as well as programmes.** This will enable us to get to more of what drives effective teaching and learning to support economically disadvantaged children and young people, providing evidence to guide the day-to-day decisions that practitioners need to make, as well as the programmes they purchase.
- **Develop and diversify our research design and methods.** This will enable us to answer different types of questions at all phases (for example, about both day-to-day approaches and effective methods to mobilise evidence) - optimising our use of randomised controlled trials and quasi-experimental designs.
- **Ensure our results are as secure, timely, and useful as possible.** We will strengthen the design and methods of our research so that we can be confident in the advice we provide to early years, schools, and 16-19 settings. This will include enhancing the design of both our impact and implementation and process evaluations - helping to understand not just *what works*, but *why it works*. We will also develop and refine our approaches to maximise our ability to produce robust findings in a timely manner.
- **Maximise the use and impact of the evidence we generate.** We will get more value from existing research by identifying the 'core components' - the key elements that make interventions successful - and by enabling other researchers to utilise our data archive.

# Priority 3

## Understanding how to drive change

We will better understand what drives change - investing more in research on evidence use and effective mobilisation strategies.

Evidence is only as powerful as the difference it makes to practice and policy. The EEF has established a trusted position, with wide reach. We now want to build on this with a significantly enhanced understanding of how our evidence and guidance are used and on the best strategies for successful mobilisation to maximise its impact to support economically disadvantaged children and young people. This will become a core area of focus for future EEF evidence generation and will inform an enhanced approach to our mobilisation work.





We will:

- **Dedicate substantial, sustained research funding to better understand how evidence is interpreted and can be effectively disseminated and adopted.** This will mark a concerted shift, with a specific strand of the research agenda (and recurring funding rounds) focused on this issue. This will include research to understand how to increase the uptake and effective implementation of evidence-informed approaches (including recommendations in EEF Guidance Reports and Toolkits) and of the EEF's Promising Programmes.
- **Establish a programme of systematic user testing, monitoring, and evaluation to understand how EEF evidence and guidance is interpreted and implemented.** We will enhance monitoring and evaluation of the impact of our own work - connected to the specific ways we are seeking to create change. This will include specific user-testing projects linked to EEF products (for example, new Guidance Reports, Toolkit updates) to understand their interpretation and implementation, as well as work to understand the barriers practitioners face to using evidence effectively.
- **Evaluate key, mission-relevant policy changes that aim to increase evidence use.** This will ensure we build an understanding of the implementation and impact of evidence-informed policies and if they are achieving intended outcomes (for example, the introduction of the Early Years Pupil Premium).
- **Better understand effective mobilisation where the need is greatest** - focusing our activity on settings and areas serving more economically disadvantaged cohorts.
- **Use the results to directly inform our mobilisation work** - adapting and enhancing the actions we take to support practice change.

# Priority 4

## Turning evidence into action



We will be clear about the change we want to see and our approach to driving it - investing more in getting evidence into action.

We will harness this enhanced understanding on effective mobilisation strategies to do more on what matters most - supporting practitioners and policymakers to make real change to improve outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people.

The EEF has made positive strides, including creating the Research Schools Network to support adoption of evidence-informed practice in local areas. But the challenges of effective implementation are significant and mobilisation is ultimately a system challenge, involving the work of multiple actors. We will do more to support this, enhancing our own mobilisation activity - and the relative EEF emphasis placed on it.





We will:

- **Update and improve guidance for practitioners.** We will publish a revised suite of Guidance Reports - including a new, flagship Great Teaching report - alongside an updated Toolkit and Early Years Evidence Store. These resources will be accessible, practical, and user-friendly, with clearer examples of effective approaches in practice - including video exemplification. They will be supported by easier ways to find information - including an AI search tool and a full website rebuild.
- **Launch targeted campaigns in key practice areas.** We will run co-ordinated campaigns to drive change in priority areas such as early language, working wherever possible in partnership with other organisations that share our mission.
- **Pursue scale-up of well evidenced programmes.** This will include efforts to support the growth and take-up of EEF Promising Programmes in the places where they are most needed. We will also make proactive efforts to fill gaps, supporting the supply of new, evidence-informed programmes through our Early Stage Development work.
- **Support evidence-informed policy to enable impact at scale.** We will work with policymakers to strengthen national initiatives - including the Pupil Premium (both Early Years and Schools) and professional development programmes (ECF, NPQs) – to ensure they are as effective as possible in improving outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people.
- **Enhance and invest in the activity of Research Schools – and build strong mobilisation networks in Early Years and 16-19.** We will build on current Research School activity with the aim of maximising its impact - introducing a new regional approach from 2027. We will also establish dedicated networks of settings and colleges in early years and 16-19 to provide expert support for the adoption of evidence-informed practice in those sectors.
- **Enhance the EEF’s emphasis on mobilisation activity.** Grounded on both the underpinning evidence base and our knowledge of effective mobilisation approaches, we will enhance the EEF’s relative emphasis on, and investment in, our mobilisation efforts.

# 06. Organisational enablers

Our organisational enablers create the vital underpinning conditions for all our work and are fundamental to the delivery of this strategy.

## People and culture

We will be supported by a strong, purpose-driven culture, reflecting our mission. Self-reflection and learning will be built into all aspects of our work - with a high trust, high challenge environment creating the conditions for continuous improvement. Challenging and expert governance supports our culture.

We prize diversity and inclusion - knowing that this makes us a stronger, more innovative and expert organisation with greater impact. We recognise the value of building an agile and positive organisation, where staff are proud to be involved in the work and development of the EEF.



# Resources and credibility

To achieve the change we want to see for disadvantaged pupils and young people it is vital that the EEF is seen as trustworthy by the profession - that is why our independence and the quality of our research are both vital. Our developing international work strengthens this, enhancing our global reputation, and we will continue to grow its reach and impact.

The EEF is committed to maximising the use of our endowment. We will emphasise efficiency and optimal use of our resources (including time and effort), driving value for money in our commissioning and procurement, and embedding strong processes that help individuals and teams deliver our strategy effectively in support of our mission.

# Innovation and technology

Advances in technology, particularly AI, is already helping us improve the efficiency of our evidence synthesis and generation work, and we will harness its potential to go further, faster.

More broadly, we will actively encourage the identification of innovative practice, supporting the sector to generate, refine, and test new ideas.

# Collaboration and communication

Deep engagement and collaboration with the early years, schools, and 16-19 sectors will be fundamental to our approach - working with and learning from others, actively seeking opportunities for partnership with mission-aligned organisations.

Our communications will be clear and compelling, drawing directly on the voices and experiences of practitioners, children, and young people to shape practice and influence policy.

We also recognise and will harness the importance of place. A child's local context is a central part of their identity and sense of belonging, and can be a powerful factor in removing barriers to opportunity.

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