

Independent Evaluation of the Discover Children's Story Centre summer writing workshop

A Randomised Controlled Trial

TRIAL PROTOCOL

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Roles and Responsibilities

Evaluation Team

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The evaluation team will be responsible for the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of the independent evaluation.

DT and CT – Design of trial; write protocol; oversee all stages in the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of trial, including recruitment and retention of schools, report-writing; supervise work of trial manager and researchers, statistician and data managers on the trial.

LJ – Design of trial; write protocol; register trial; trial co-ordination and data management, contribution to the analysis and write up.

HA and NM – Trial co-ordination assistance.

HB – Design of trial, write trial analysis plan, randomisation, conduct analyses, contribute to write up.

CH – Assist with trial co-ordination and data management; co-ordinate independent outcome assessments

Sponsor

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Implementation Team

Discover Children's Story Centre. Registered Charity No: 1070468

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Discover Children's Story Centre (implementation team) will be responsible for school recruitment and on-going relationship with schools, informing parents and pupils, intervention development, including writing detailed description of intervention to allow others, if necessary, to be able to replicate the intervention in other areas, intervention training and delivery, baseline data collection.

Funder

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Registered charity 1142111, Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London SW1P 4QP.

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The Education Endowment Foundation has funded both the Transitions Project (Improving Writing Quality) and the independent evaluation. They will have oversight of the project.

Ethics Committee

Durham University School of Education Ethics Committee

York Health Sciences Research Governance Committee (by Chair's Action)

Advisory Group

Durham University School of Education and CEM EEF panel of evaluators and York Trial Unit panel of evaluators will provide advice on any aspect of the design, conduct and reporting of the evaluation when and as required.

Background and significance

The Education Endowment Foundation has funded the University of York and Durham University to evaluate the *Discover Children's Story Centre summer writing workshop* intervention being delivered and supported by Discover Children's Story Centre.

The intervention will provide summer writing workshops to children between Year 6 and the start of Year 7. The intervention will involve a four week summer programme for children in order to improve reading and writing skills, specifically of children who are less able writers. The programme will include a variety of workshops, including poetry and literacy sessions, in which children will also have the opportunity to engage with professional poets and writers. A range of enrichment activities will also be provided including: drama, sports activities and trips around London, such as West End performances and visits to the Olympic Park. An independent evaluation using rigorous design and methods is timely as there have been no previous evaluations of the impact of this project.

The trial will compare the summer writing workshop intervention with a "business as usual" control group who will not receive the summer writing workshop. Such a comparison will allow us to estimate whether or not there is an important intervention effect. We propose to recruit 250 pupils for this evaluation.

The implementation team (Discover) will be responsible for developing and delivering the *summer writing workshop* intervention. They will provide a detailed description of the intervention and a manual to be used as guidance for these summer schools.

Research Question

What is the effectiveness of the *Discover* summer writing workshop intervention compared with a "business as usual" control group on the reading and writing abilities of participating children?

Design

This will be a pragmatic individually randomised controlled trial involving 250 children. We estimate that there will be approximately 10-12 children, per primary school class of approximately 27 children, who will be potentially eligible for this study. The average primary school size in the geographical area will determine the number of primary schools that will be required to achieve this sample size.

Pupils in Year 6 will be eligible to be included in the trial if they 1) attend a participating secondary school and 2) are predicted to achieve between level 3c and level 4c in English by the end of Key Stage 2 (based on teacher assessment).

Pupils whose parents provide informed consent for them to participate in the trial will be randomised to either the intervention or control. The intervention group will be invited to attend a Discover Children's Story Centre four week summer programme, which will take place at one hosting secondary school. Pupils attending the summer school will then be randomly allocated into one of five teaching groups. The control group will not attend the Discover Children's Story Centre four week summer programme, however in order to increase recruitment and avoid

disappointment the control group will receive a secondary school-based reading and writing intervention delivered in the autumn term 2013. This secondary school-based intervention will not form part of the evaluation as it will take place after the outcome testing.

The trial will be designed, conducted and reported to CONSORT standards (Altman et al, 2011) in order to minimise all potential threats to internal validity, such as selection bias and a range of post randomisation biases (Cook and Campbell, 1969; Shadish, Cook and Campbell, 2002; Torgerson and Torgerson, 2008). In this way, unbiased estimates of the impact of the intervention will be provided.

Recruitment

The *Discover* charity will recruit appropriate schools and pupils. Recruitment will take place during the development phase of the intervention (i.e. between March and May 2013). The York/Durham evaluation team will prepare information documentation about the evaluation for schools and pupils/parents. This will include details of the trial design. The intervention will be delivered during the summer break between Year 6 and Year 7.

Inclusion criteria

Participating secondary schools will liaise with primary schools to provide a list of pupils that will be attending in the autumn term 2013. Primary schools will screen this list of pupils to identify potential pupils meeting the following inclusion criteria:

- 1) Attend a participating secondary school
- 2) Predicted to achieve between level 3c and level 4c in English by the end of Key Stage 2 (based on teacher assessment).

Primary schools will inform the parents of eligible pupils about the study (material and help provided by the evaluation team and Discover charity). Parents will then be asked to provide written informed consent to agree for their child to participate in the study.

School participation

In order for schools to be eligible to take part in the evaluation and to receive the intervention, we will put in place a memorandum of understanding with the schools which will specify the following:

Primary schools:

- Enthusiasm for the project and for professional development
- Agreement to be in the independent evaluation
- Willingness to allow the random allocation of Year 6 pupils to either intervention or comparison group
- Willingness to identify all eligible pupils using pre-specified criteria
- Provision of baseline data about pupils

Secondary schools:

- Enthusiasm for the project and for professional development

- Agreement to be in the independent evaluation
- Liaison with feeder primary schools to identify pupils that will attend in Year 7
- Willingness to administer the outcome assessment to children participating in the trial in Year 7 within 2 weeks of the summer intervention ending (the test will be marked independently by external markers)

Randomisation

An independent individual at York Trials Unit will use a dedicated computer program to carry out all randomisation. Once parents and pupils have given consent their details will be sent to the York Trials Unit and these will be entered onto a randomisation database. Pupils will be individually randomised to either the intervention or control group. If recruitment is as predicted, this randomisation will use equal allocation. Due to there being a limited number of places on the summer school, if recruitment is better than expected, unequal allocation will be used with 125 pupils allocated to the intervention group and with those remaining allocated to the control group. If recruitment is not as good as anticipated, unequal allocation will favour the intervention group in order to fill all the places on the summer school.

Pupils randomised to the intervention group will be randomised further into five groups for teaching purposes using equal allocation. Pupils randomised to the control group will be pseudo randomised to one of the five teaching groups for analysis purposes using equal allocation.

Sample size calculation

This trial will aim to recruit 250 pupils. To estimate the differences that we could estimate, with 80% power ($2p = 0.05$), we use the assumption that there will be a pre and post-test correlation of 0.70 (i.e. the outcome test will correlate with the Key Stage 2 English result with a correlation of 0.70). This means that we have an effective sample size of 510 pupils. Allowing for a 10% attrition rate give an effective sample size to 460 pupils. This would give 80% power to show a difference of 0.27 standard deviations in writing score between the intervention and control groups should a difference of this magnitude exist.

Analysis

Analysis will be conducted using the principles of intention to treat, meaning that all pupils will be analysed in the group to which they were randomised irrespective of whether or not they actually received the intervention.

Statistical significance will be assessed at the 5% level unless otherwise stated and 95% confidence intervals will be provided as appropriate. Methods for handling missing data and further detail on analyses will be provided within a statistical analysis plan.

Primary Analysis

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the intervention on the writing skills of eligible children. The difference between pupils receiving the Discover four week summer programme intervention and those pupils in the control group will be compared using

regression analysis with writing post-test result as the response variable. Group allocation, predicted KS2 score and gender will be included as covariates in the model.

Secondary Analyses

A similar method to that taken in the primary analysis will be used to assess differences between the intervention and control groups in terms of the secondary outcomes of reading, spelling and grammar.

Subgroup analyses will investigate the effect of the intervention on pupils who are eligible for FSM in terms of post-test scores.

The impact of non-compliance (should this occur) will also be assessed, using Complier Average Causal Effect (CACE) analysis, which will estimate the intervention's impact on writing skills in the absence of non-compliance.

An ancillary analysis will compare difference in terms of post-test scores between the intervention and control pupils assigned to the five teaching groups using a paired t test.

Outcome measure

We propose to use the Progress in English 11 (Long Form), GL Assessment, for our main literacy outcome. The primary outcome will be the combined score on the two writing tasks within the test. Secondary outcomes will be scores on the reading, spelling and grammar components of the test. The assessment will be carried out within 2 weeks of the intervention ending, in local secondary schools. All tests will be completed during the first three weeks of the autumn term 2013. Long term outcomes can be collected through the National Pupil Database.

Test results will be marked, blind to group assignment, by GL assessment. The results will then be sent to Durham University and copies of the results will be forwarded to the York Trials Unit for analysis.

Process evaluation

Independent observer(s) will attend at least one session of the Discover Children's Story Centre summer workshop to observe the delivery of the intervention.

Data Protection Statement

Durham University's data protection policy is publically available at:
<http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/data.protection/dataprotectionpolicy.pdf>

"Durham University is committed to protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. The requirements to which University staff and student who process personal data must adhere are set out in the University's Data Protection Policy"

The University of York's data protection policy is publically available at:

Risks

Low risks associated with this project include operational and project specific risks. For the operational risks such as staffing and IT / assessment system we are confident that we have systems and procedures in place to minimise any risks, but would nonetheless be very happy to provide further details.

School and pupil recruitment – whilst this will be the primary responsibility of the implementation team, the evaluation team have a good track of recruiting schools, and will help with this if necessary.

Attrition and loss to follow up – in a study such as this it is essential that this is kept to a minimum. Whilst this will be the primary responsibility of the implementation team, our involvement, as with the recruitment, will help to minimise attrition.

Maintaining fidelity (intervention and control) - it is essential that as many as possible schools maintain a high level of implementation fidelity. Again whilst the primary responsibility will lie with the implementation team we will provide some support, for example, by emphasising the importance of contributing to the process of building good evidence.

References

Altman DG, Moher D & Schulz KF (2012). Improving the reporting of randomised trials: the CONSORT Statement and beyond. *Statist. Med.*, 31: 2985–2997.

Cook TD & Campbell D. (1979). *Quasi-experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

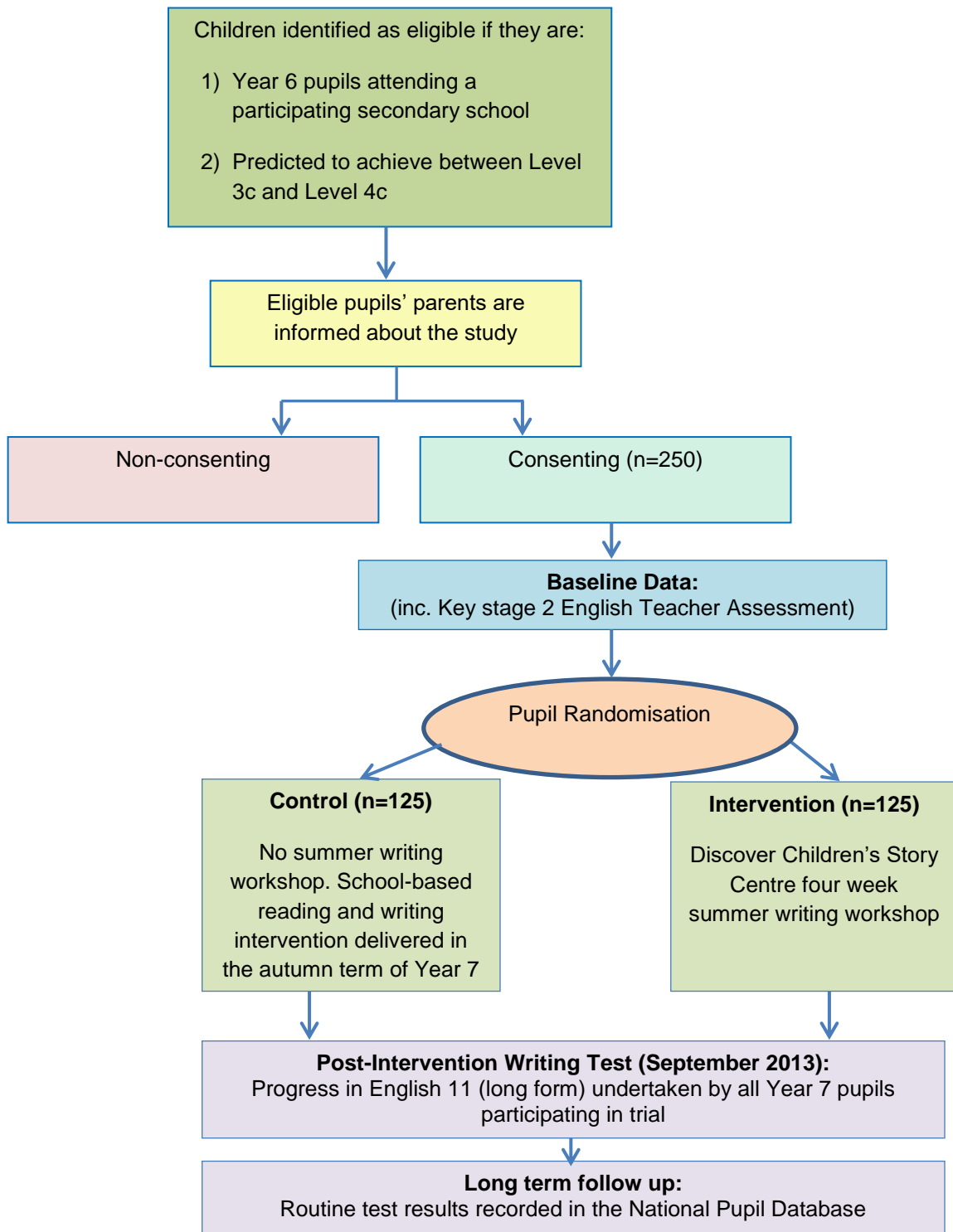
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Torgerson CJ, Wiggins A, Torgerson DT, Ainsworth H, Barmby P, Hewitt C, Jones K, Hendry V, Askew M, Bland M, Coe, R, Higgins S, Hodgen J, Hulme C & Tymms P. (2011). *The Every Child Counts Independent Evaluation Report*. Department of Education.

Appendices

Appendix A: Trial Diagram



Appendix B: Trial Timeline

Discover Summer School Timeline												
	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13	Dec-13
Intervention Development	█											
Apply for University Ethics	█		█									
Recruitment of Primary and Secondary Schools			█									
Recruitment of Pupils & Parents					█							
Randomisation						█						
Baseline Data Collection						█						
Delivery of intervention							█					
Post Intervention Testing									█			
Analysis & Report Writing										█		

Appendix C: Data Collection Table

Proposed Data Baseline Transfer Date (pupil): By end of w/c 17th June

Proposed Randomisation Date: w/c 24th June

Post Intervention Data Collection Date: First two weeks of autumn term (9th Sept – 20th Sept)

DP[†] = Delivery Partner (Discover) **EV** = Evaluators (York and Durham) **GL** = GL Assessment

EVD = Evaluators (Durham) **EVY** = Evaluators (York) **EEF** = Education Endowment Fund

	Variable	Required By
School Information: (For both primary and secondary school unless otherwise stated)	School Name	All
	Secondary School DCSF code	GL
	Secondary School Address + Postcode	GL
	Secondary School Telephone Number	GL
	Secondary School Assessment Lead Name	GL
	Secondary School Assessment Lead Email and Role	GL
	Number of tests required per secondary school	GL
	Number of Pupils on Roll	EV
	% pupils FSM	EV
	% pupils from minority ethnic groups	EV
	% pupils supported at school action plus without SEN statement	EV
	Special measures (binary variable)	EV
Pupil Information:	Pupil Name	EEF, EVD, GL
	UPN	EEF, EVD, GL
	DoB	EEF, EV, GL
	Gender (M/F)	EEF, EV, GL
	Predicted KS2 English Level (before randomisation)	EEF, EV
	Actual KS2 English Level [°]	EEF, EV
	FSM	EEF, EV
	PP	EEF, EV
	EAL	EEF, EV
	Secondary School Class	EV, GL
	Teaching Group During Summer School*	EV
Post Intervention:	Pupil post test results [‡]	EEF, EV
	Absence data	EV

[°]Retrieving from NPD

* Only for children allocated to intervention

[‡]Provided by GL Assessment to Evaluators at Durham

[†]All required by DP

Evaluation of the Discover Literacy Summer School intervention

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) have asked researchers at the University of York and Durham University to evaluate a *Literacy Summer School* intervention being delivered and supported by the Discover Children's Story Centre in 2013. The summer school intervention will take place during a four-week period and will combine literacy sessions with enrichment activities (including a range of exciting experiences such as trips to West End performances, opportunities to meet with professional writers and poets and sporting activities). Everything, including healthy meals, will be provided free of charge. Lister Community School will host the intervention, which will be delivered by the Discover team from 29th July to 23rd August 2013.

The evaluation aims to find out if the intervention improves pupils' reading and writing skills during the transition from Year 6 to Year 7, especially the writing skills of pupils who are currently achieving between KS2 Level 3c and 4c in English. In order to find out how well the *Literacy Summer School* works, we must compare children attending the summer school to those that do not. This has to be decided completely at random using a computer, and those children who are not allocated to receive the intervention will be offered a school-based Saturday morning literacy workshop in the autumn term of Year 7.

We aim to recruit 250 pupils for this evaluation, 125 of whom will receive the intervention and 125 of whom will form the control group. All primary schools who decide to take part in the intervention and its evaluation will be asked to provide information to the University of York about all pupils that consent to take part in the study. The information will include each pupil's UPN and their predicted KS2 teacher assessment in English plus some demographic information (e.g. gender, date of birth, Free School Meal status). Some basic demographic information about the school will also be requested at this stage.

At the beginning of autumn term 2013, all 250 participating Year 7 pupils in participating secondary schools will be tested so that researchers at the University of York can estimate the effect the intervention has had on pupils' writing skills by comparing results from children who attended the summer school to those who did not. The GL Assessment Progress in English (PiE) 11 (Long Form) will be used.

What commitment would this project require from schools?

- Enthusiasm for the project
- Willingness to provide feeder primary schools with information about eligible pupils attending in Year 7 (secondary schools)
- Willingness to identify, provide information letters and collect consent forms for eligible children in Year 6 (primary schools)
- Provision of baseline data about pupils in Year 6 (primary schools)
- Willingness to administer a writing test to all participating Year 7 pupils during the first weeks of autumn term 2013 (the test will be marked independently by external markers) (secondary schools)

As a designated EEF Research Partner School you will be entitled to: permission to use the EEF's logo on your website, a certificate showing that the school is an EEF Research Partner School, access to EEF networking and knowledge events, a regular newsletter updating schools on the latest EEF projects and evidence, free places for Year 6 teachers on a literacy INSET to be held at Discover in the autumn term.

When will this project take place?

We hope to inform parents of potential pupils in May and collect consent for their children to take part in this evaluation around May half term. For all consenting pupils, baseline data will be collected and pupils randomised in June. Parents will be notified of their child's allocation to intervention or control group in July and the intervention will take place between 29th July and 23rd August. Participating pupils will be tested in the first 2-3 weeks of the autumn term 2013, after which point pupils in the control group will be offered a Saturday morning literacy session.

Is there funding to support my involvement?

Yes – the Discover Children's Centre will provide all activities, travel and meals free of charge. The Saturday morning literacy sessions delivered to control group children in the autumn term will also be provided free of charge.

Appendix E: Primary School Agreement to participate form

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*



Evaluation of the Discover Literacy Summer School intervention

Primary School Agreement to Participate

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above evaluation and have had the opportunity to ask questions;
- I understand that all children's results will be kept confidential and that no material which could identify individual children or the school will be used in any reports of this evaluation;
- I agree to identify eligible pupils in Year 6;
- I agree to providing an information letter to all parents of eligible children in Year 6;
- I agree to collect in parent consent forms;
- I agree to provide baseline data about participating pupils in Year 6;
- I understand that pupils' test responses will be collected by GL Assessment and accessed by the evaluation team. Named data will be matched with the National Pupil Database and shared between the evaluation team, Discover Children's Story Centre and EEF.
- I consent to the school taking part in the above study**

Name of headteacher

Name of School

School Tel no

Headteacher Email address

Name of School Contact (if not headteacher).....

School Contact email address.....

Signature of headteacher.....Date.....

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. Please return this consent form by post to:

Mrs D Parsons, Discover Children's Story Centre, 383-387 High Street, Stratford, London, E15 4QZ

Appendix F: Secondary School Agreement to participate form

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*



Evaluation of the Discover Literacy Summer School intervention

Secondary School Agreement to Participate

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above evaluation and have had the opportunity to ask questions;
- I understand that all children's results will be kept confidential and that no material which could identify individual children or the school will be used in any reports of this evaluation;
- I agree to provide feeder primary schools with information about the pupils that will be attending the school in Year 7 in the autumn term on 2013;
- I agree to administer a writing test to all participating Year 7 pupils in September 2013
- I understand that pupils' test responses will be collected by GL Assessment and accessed by the evaluation team. Named data will be matched with the National Pupil Database and shared between the evaluation team, Discover Children's Story Centre and EEF.
- I consent to the school taking part in the above study**

Name of headteacher

Name of School

School Tel no

Headteacher Email address

Name of School Contact (if not headteacher).....

School Contact email address.....

Signature of headteacher.....Date.....

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. Please return this consent form by post to:

Mrs D Parsons, Discover Children's Story Centre, 383-387 High Street, Stratford, London, E15 4QZ

Appendix G: Parent and Pupil Information Letter Year 6



Evaluation of the Discover Literacy Summer School intervention:

Information Letter for Parents

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]

Dear Parent / Carer

Durham University and the University of York have been asked by the Education Endowment Foundation (an organisation funding research into education) to independently evaluate the *Discover Literacy Summer School* programme. The summer school is being led by the Discover Children's Story Centre (a charity organisation in the local area).

Your child's school has been chosen to take part in the evaluation and have identified your child as suitable for the study. We would like to invite your child to take part.

What is the purpose of the evaluation?

The *Discover Literacy Summer School* programme is designed to improve children's writing skills during the transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Good writing skills are important for all children. This evaluation will find out how helpful the *Discover Literacy Summer School* is. The results of this study could influence the provision of literacy summer schools such as this in the future.

What does this mean for my child?

To find out how well the summer school programme works, children whose parents consent for them to take part will be allocated **completely at random** by computer, to either attend a four-week summer school or to receive a school-based literacy session delivered on a Saturday morning in the autumn term of Year 7. Both activities are offered completely **free of charge** and further details are provided below. All schools will continue to teach children writing skills during term time.

The summer school

Children allocated to the summer school group will be invited to attend a four-week literacy summer school. This will be held at Lister Community School from 29th July to 23rd August 2013, Mondays to Fridays from 8.30am and 4pm. The programme will combine literacy sessions with a range of exciting and memorable activities, such as trips to West End performances, opportunities to meet professional writers and poets and sporting activities. Further details of the programme will be sent to you, should you wish your child to take part and they are allocated to this group.

Autumn term Saturday literacy sessions

Children allocated to this group will receive a half-day Saturday session in the autumn 2013 term, consisting of an intensive graphic novel/comic writing activity, led by a Discover artist and Story Builder. Each child will be given a complimentary book from Discover, signed by the author. Further details of these autumn sessions will be sent to you, should you wish your child to take part and they are allocated to this group.

What will happen next?

If you consent for your child to take part we will collect information about your child from your child's primary school, and later from your child's secondary school. Your child's school will provide information including your child's name, date of birth, gender, unique pupil number, details on your child's current National Curriculum writing level, free school meal status, eligibility for pupil premium and English as an Additional Language (EAL) status.

In order to measure the effectiveness of the summer school intervention, both groups of pupils will be tested at the start of the autumn term 2013 so that we can estimate what effect the intervention has had on their writing skills. We expect that your child will enjoy doing the tests and being part of the programme.

Your child's information will be treated with the strictest confidence. Named data will be matched with the National Pupil Database and shared between the evaluation team, Discover charity and EEF. We will not use your child's name or the name of the school in any report arising from the research. Your child's information will be kept confidential at all times. Your child may withdraw from the evaluation at any time.

Thank you for reading this information. If you are happy for your child to take part in this study, please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to your child's school by [INSERT DATE].

If you would like further information about the *Discover Literacy Summer School* evaluation please contact Laura Jefferson, the Evaluation Coordinator: laura.jefferson@york.ac.uk ; 01904 321511

Yours faithfully

Professor David Torgerson (University of York)
Professor Carole Torgerson (Durham University)
Discover Children's Story Centre
Education Endowment Foundation

Appendix H: Parent consent form



Evaluation of the Discover Literacy Summer School intervention:

Parent Consent Form

If you would like your child to take part in the Discover Literacy Summary School programme evaluation, please complete the following information and return this form to your child's school as soon as possible.

Please initial in boxes

1. I **AGREE** to my child taking part in the *Discover Literacy Summer School* evaluation
2. I understand that there are two programmes and **AGREE** to my child being randomly allocated to attend **either** the four-week summer school or an autumn term literacy session as part of this evaluation
3. I **AGREE** to my child undertaking a test of their writing ability in the autumn term 2013
4. I **AGREE** to my child's data being shared for use in the *Discover Literacy Summer School* evaluation

Parent/Carer Signature..... Date.....

Child's Name.....

Home address of child:

Email address of parent:

Home contact number:

Mobile contact number:

Child's primary school.....

Child's primary school class.....

Child's secondary school.....

Child's secondary school class (if known).....

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S CLASS TEACHER by: [insert date]