

**Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS-UK)
Effectiveness Trial
Evaluation Protocol**

**Evaluator (institution): Manchester
Metropolitan University**

Principal investigator(s): Helen Lawson and Stephen Morris



Education
Endowment
Foundation

Evaluation summary

Project title	Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS-UK) Effectiveness Trial
Developers <i>(Institutions)</i>	Nottingham Trent University and University of Birmingham
Evaluator <i>(Institution)</i>	Manchester Metropolitan University
Principal investigator(s)	Dr Helen Lawson; Prof Stephen Morris
Protocol author(s)	Dr Helen Lawson; Dr Karolina Krzemieniewska- Nandwani; Prof Steph Ainsworth; Prof Stephen Morris
Trial design	Two-arm cluster randomised controlled trial with random allocation at school level
Trial type	Effectiveness
Pupil age range and Key stage	9-10 years old, KS2
Number of schools <i>(at design stage)</i>	250
Number of pupils <i>(at design stage)</i>	10,626
Primary outcome measure and source	New PiRA Summer Year 5 Test
Secondary outcome measure and source	Oral reading fluency (speed and accuracy - (WIAT-III UK-T)) Reading comprehension (WIAT-III UK-T) Reading Engagement Scale (RES) Reading attainment at age 11 (NPD)

Protocol version history

Version	Date	Reason for revision
1.0 [original]	30/7/2026	N/A

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Study rationale and background

Reading attainment continues to be a priority in England. Being able to read well is key to accessing learning across the curriculum. In the KS2 national curriculum assessments in the summer of 2024, 26% of pupils did not meet the expected standard in reading, this rose to 38% for disadvantaged pupils (DfE, 2025), defined as ‘those who were registered as eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years, children looked after by a local authority or have left local authority care in England and Wales through adoption, a special guardianship order, a residence order or a child arrangements order’ (DfE, 2025, Disadvantage gap index section). Pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to read at the expected standard (or above) and schools cite reading as one of the main barriers to attainment (alongside attendance) (EEF, 2023). In addition, the evidence shows that pupils proficient in reading and writing in primary school earn £65,000 more over their lifetime than those lacking these key skills (DfE, 2025). Following the disruption to children’s learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to ‘get pupils back on track’ with their reading is arguably more urgent than ever (Ofsted, 2023), especially for disadvantaged pupils, whose learning is likely to have been disrupted by school closures (Cullinane and Montacute, 2020). Moreover, the National Literacy Trust (NLT) reports that only 1 in 3 children and young people aged 8-18 say they enjoy reading in their free time (NLT, 2025). To reverse the trend in declining rates of reading for pleasure, in 2026 the DfE and NLT launched a National Year of Reading.

The Peer Assisted Learning Strategies for reading (PALS-UK) effectiveness trial builds on two previous trials (Lewin et al., 2024; Culora et al., 2022). The EEF efficacy trial of this programme conducted by Lewin et al., (2024) found that children in schools who received the PALS-UK programme made, on average, an additional two months’ progress in reading compared to children in the control schools. The results of the secondary measures in this trial suggested that this progress was driven by improvements in reading comprehension and reading fluency. There was also some qualitative evidence from the implementation and process evaluation that PALS-UK may support comprehension monitoring (Lewin et al., 2024), a metacognitive skill in which readers evaluate their understanding of a text and, when they identify a breakdown in meaning, use strategies such as re-reading to repair comprehension (Breadmore et al., 2019).

Ever-FSM, EAL and SEND subgroups were also all shown to have benefited from the programme in the second trial. There was some evidence that SEND pupils may have benefited more, but this was weak and tentative (Lewin et al., 2024). An earlier EEF efficacy trial conducted by Culora and colleagues (2022) suggested that children receiving PALS-UK made the equivalent of one month’s less progress in reading overall, but children eligible for free school meals who were receiving PALS-UK made one month’s additional progress. The disruption associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, however, led to a low evidence strength rating and uncertainty over the generalisability of these findings and, therefore, hence a second efficacy trial. The programme is now listed by the EEF as a Promising Programme.

This new, large-scale effectiveness trial aims to provide additional evidence about the programme’s effectiveness when delivered under real-world school conditions. This evaluation of PALS-UK is made up of three strands:

- i) an impact evaluation (IE). A two-arm, cluster randomised controlled trial will be conducted over one year to assess whether PALS-UK led to an observable improvement in outcomes for Year 5 pupils, with KS2 reading scores analysed from the National Pupil Database (NPD) as a follow-up measure;

- ii) an implementation and process evaluation (IPE). The IPE will adopt a mixed methods approach and will administer pre- and post-surveys to teachers and headteachers, and conduct case studies in ten schools.
- iii) a cost evaluation. This will provide information on the delivery costs incurred by intervention schools from delivering PALS-UK

Intervention

PALS-UK is a structured peer mediated reading programme that aims to raise reading attainment by developing pupils' oral reading fluency and reading comprehension, in addition to reading engagement and self-efficacy. PALS-UK is a whole-class reading programme and centres on pupils working in pairs, taking it in turn as coach and reader as they engage in four text-related activities. For this evaluation we will focus on children in Year 5 (aged 9-10 years). The programme consists of 35-minute sessions, delivered three times per week for 20 weeks. Within each pair, one of the children is given the role of first reader. This is the child who the teacher considers to have a higher current attainment in reading relative to the second reader. Within the activities children take turns to act as both coach and reader.

Each PALS-UK session is organised around four core activities:

- i) **Partner reading** (10 minutes): Each child reads for 5 minutes while the other child coaches them.
- ii) **Retell** (2 minutes): The second reader retells what has just happened in the text just read while the first reader coaches them.
- iii) **Paragraph shrinking** (10 minutes): The children take turns to read and summarise paragraphs, while the other child coaches them.
- iv) **Prediction relay** (10 minutes): The children take turns to predict what will happen in the next half a page, they then read the page and check the accuracy of their predictions.

Partner reading focuses on building oral reading fluency, while retell, paragraph shrinking, and prediction relay are strategies that support the development of reading comprehension. Together, these activities are designed to strengthen reading self-efficacy and engagement by providing scaffolded tasks within a supportive, peer-assisted learning environment.

Participating Year 5 teachers will receive face-to-face training from the developer team: Dr Emma Vardy (Nottingham Trent University) and Prof Helen Breadmore (University of Birmingham). The first training session will take place prior to the start of the programme and will run for one full day. It will provide teachers with training on the key skills underpinning reading comprehension and fluency, alongside a detailed overview of the programme. During this session, teachers will also have opportunities to practise the four PALS-UK activities and to discuss important implementation considerations, such as how to pair pupils effectively. There is an additional cost of £75 per teacher who attends the initial in-person training. The second 'top-up' training session will be delivered online. It is a shorter, 1.5 hour webinar, held four weeks into the programme. This session will focus on supporting teachers with appropriate book selection (pupils' choice is important but should be guided by teachers), effective re-pairing of pupils (which is intended to occur every four weeks), and sharing examples of good practice. The top-up training also includes guidance on how to introduce the mini lessons, which are recaps for pupils about the paired reading, based around core parts of the programme (maybe needed after a holiday for

example). There are then optional drop-in sessions for teachers to attend if they have any questions and to share practice.

Following the completion of pre-programme teacher training, PALS-UK begins with four weeks of whole-class training for pupils. During this phase, children are taught how to work effectively with a partner and how to engage with the sequence of activities outlined above. To avoid cognitive overload, each pupil training session introduces only one new skill. A school is regarded as compliant if both teacher training day and 4-week pupil training is completed. Thus, a non-compliant school will be one in which one or both forms of training have not been completed.

In addition to the training, intervention schools also receive a programme manual (one per Year 5 class). To ensure effective implementation, pupils must have access to a diverse range of high-quality and appropriately levelled reading materials. Subsidised book sets of approximately 20 books (£50) are available for intervention schools requiring additional resources

The PALS-UK programme runs for a total of 20 weeks, comprising four weeks of whole-class pupil training followed by 16 weeks of PALS-UK sessions. During the programme phase, pupil pairings are changed every four weeks and are determined by teachers' assessments of pupils' current reading level. During the initial in-person training day, teachers conduct a median split informed by baseline PiRA scores (New PiRA Test 4, Summer), alongside their professional knowledge of pupils' reading abilities. Pupils in the higher half of the class are designated as first readers, while those in the lower half are designated as second readers; these roles remain consistent throughout the 20-week programme and re-pairing.

Initially, teachers are advised to pair the highest-attaining pupil from the above-median group with the highest-attaining pupil from the below-median group, continuing this pattern across the class. This approach ensures a clear, but not excessive, difference in reading level within each pair. Teachers are given some flexibility in forming pairs to account for additional factors, such as personality or working relationships, that may influence how well pupils collaborate. If a pairing proves ineffective, teachers are encouraged to adjust the groupings accordingly.

Text selection is determined by the pupils. The teacher influences pupils' choices, based on the reading attainment of each pair, to ensure that the text is not too difficult for each reader in the pair, and it should be chosen at the second reader's level. Guidance on this is provided during the in-person training, as well as at the top-up training session, and within the manual. Pupils are also offered some choice of reading material to support motivation. Where appropriate, pupils with SEND or who are in the earlier stages of learning English as an additional language may be supported by a teaching assistant who joins the pair as an additional coach. In addition, teachers are advised in the PALS-UK training that if pupils are not yet able to read connected text, where possible, they should receive targeted interventions during PALS-UK session times until they have sufficient reading skill to engage with the activities. This is because pupils need a certain level of fluency to engage with the PALS-UK activities. The programme will be delivered during the Autumn and Spring terms of Year 5 (October 2026 to April 2027).

To support delivery of PALS-UK, two observations will be conducted by a nominated peer observer within the school to gather professional insights into how PALS-UK operates within the class: one observation during the pupil training and one during the 16-week intervention period. In multiform entry schools the peer observer will be another Year 5 teacher delivering PALS-UK. In single-form entry schools the peer observer will be another member of school staff nominated by the school. Attending the training is not a requirement for the observer, but they will have access to the digital resources. A structured observation schedule informed by the original

schedule developed by Professor Kristen McMaster (one of the developers of the original US PALS programme) will be used by the peer observer. The checklist will vary to reflect which stage (pupil training versus main phase) is being observed.

Control schools will not receive training and will not implement the PALS-UK programme. Instead, they will continue with their 'business as usual' approach to reading instruction. As a thank you payment, on completion of the baseline and endline testing schools in the control group will receive £500. At the conclusion of the trial, control schools will be invited to join a mailing list to receive further information about PALS-UK and may choose to use part of the £500 to access training and the programme manual after completion of the trial. In addition, at the end of baseline and endline data collection (September 2026 and September 2027) control schools will be granted access to PiRA data for participating Year 4 (baseline) and Year 5 (endline) pupils as a further thank you (as described above, intervention schools will also receive this data to inform pupil pairings).

The logic model (below) lays out the theoretical relationships between elements of the PALS-UK programme and the pupil outcomes that will be measured in the impact evaluation. PALS-UK is primarily designed to develop oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. The emphasis on regular practice at reading aloud, re-reading and receiving feedback from a peer is predicted to improve reading fluency (Rasinski, 2003). The other activities of re-tell, paragraph shrinking and prediction relay are each designed to encourage children to make meaning as they read, thus supporting them with opportunities to develop their reading comprehension skills (Breadmore et al., 2026).

As pupils read for meaning, they are likely to expand their vocabulary, which in turn supports both reading comprehension and oral reading fluency. Familiarity with words encountered in context helps children develop an understanding of their meanings, while known vocabulary can be read more quickly and with greater accuracy and expression. Consequently, the relationship between vocabulary, reading comprehension, and oral reading fluency is likely to be reciprocal (Breadmore et al., 2019; Pikulaki & Chard, 2011).

With regular reading practice, and the associated improvements in fluency and comprehension, reading becomes less effortful. As a result, children are likely to experience increases in reading self-efficacy, motivation, confidence, and more positive attitudes towards reading (Peura et al., 2019; Reis et al., 2008). Improvements in these areas may, in turn, encourage children to read more for intrinsic reasons leading to further gains in self-efficacy, confidence, and motivation (Breadmore et al., 2019; Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Beyond individual benefits, increased levels of independent reading for pleasure among pupils can contribute to the development and maintenance of a positive reading culture at the classroom and school levels (Merga & Mason, 2019).

This wider reading culture is also shaped by teachers' knowledge of reading, which is a key focus of the PALS-UK programme. The training sessions aim to strengthen teachers' understanding of the component skills involved in skilled reading and to equip them with pedagogical strategies to foster these skills within a supportive, peer-learning environment. Evidence from the previous trial highlighted the potential impact of PALS-UK on both pupil vocabulary and teacher knowledge, leading to their inclusion in the current logic model (Lewin et al., 2024).

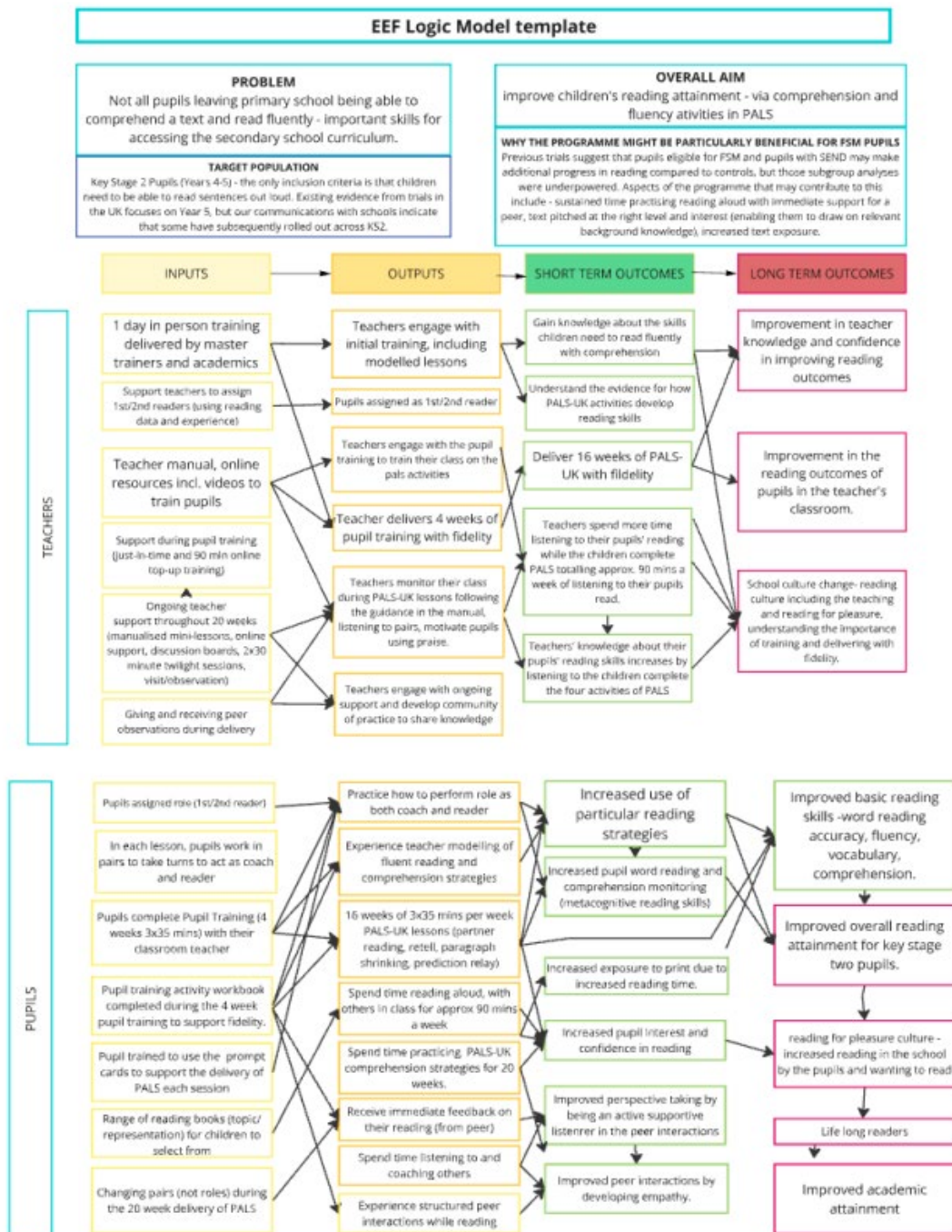
Another outcome expected to improve over the course of the PALS-UK programme is pupils' peer support skills. This reflects the initial four-week pupil-training period, during which children learn

how to work effectively in pairs and to take shared responsibility for completing the PALS-UK activity sequence.

Together, the intermediate and secondary outcomes outlined above are likely to contribute to improvements in the more distal outcome of reading attainment. This is because oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, reading self-efficacy, motivation for reading, and reading for pleasure have all been shown to be important predictors of reading attainment (Carroll & Fox, 2017; Clark & Rumbold, 2006; Rasinski et al., 2005).

There are a number of contextual factors that might affect implementation and impact: support from the senior leadership team, teacher engagement, pupil engagement, fidelity, reading material is pitched at the pupil pairs' level and pupil characteristics. These are all factors that will be considered in the implementation and process evaluation.

Figure 1: PALS-UK logic model



Impact evaluation design

Research questions

Primary research question

1. What is the difference in the average reading attainment score for Year 5 pupils in schools exposed to PALS-UK, compared to Year 5 pupils in control schools exposed to business-as-usual conditions?

Secondary research questions

1. What is the difference in the average oral reading fluency score for Year 5 pupils in schools exposed to PALS-UK, compared to Year 5 pupils in control schools exposed to business-as-usual conditions?
2. What is the difference in the average reading comprehension score for Year 5 pupils in schools exposed to PALS-UK, compared to Year 5 pupils in control schools exposed to business-as-usual conditions?
3. What is the difference in the average reading engagement score for Year 5 pupils in schools exposed to PALS-UK, compared to Year 5 pupils in control schools exposed to business-as-usual conditions?
4. What is the difference in the average KS2 Reading NCT scaled score for Year 6 pupils in schools exposed to PALS-UK, compared to Year 6 pupils in control schools exposed to business-as-usual conditions?

Claims as to the effectiveness of PALS-UK, or otherwise, will only be made in relation to the primary outcome. This means that multiplicity corrections in hypothesis tests will not be required.

Design

Table 1: Trial design

Trial design, including number of arms		Two-arm, cluster randomised trial
Unit of randomisation		School
Stratification variables (if applicable)		Geographic area
Primary outcome	Variable	Reading attainment
	Measure (instrument, scale, source)	New PiRA Summer Term Year 5 Test, 0-40
Secondary outcome(s)	Variable(s)	Oral reading fluency (speed and accuracy) Reading comprehension Reading engagement Reading attainment at age 11
	Measure(s) (instrument, scale, source)	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – III for Teachers (WIAT-III UK-T) Reading Engagement Scale KS2 Reading NCT scaled score from the NPD
Baseline for primary outcome	Variable	Reading attainment
	Measure (instrument, scale, source)	New PiRA Summer Term Year 4 Test, 0-40
Baseline for secondary outcome	Variable	Reading attainment Reading Engagement Reading attainment (containing imputed values for missing responses if applicable)
	Measure (instrument, scale, source)	New PiRA Summer Term Year 4 Test, 0-40 Reading Engagement Scale (RES) New PiRA Summer Term Year 4 Test (containing imputed values for missing responses if applicable), 0-40

The trial aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the PALS-UK programme on the reading attainment of Year 5 primary school pupils as the primary outcome. Schools will be randomly allocated to either PALS-UK or control group on a 1:1 basis. Teachers in the intervention group will receive PALS-UK training, while control group schools will continue following their existing reading programme, which we refer to as business-as-usual. Additionally, the control schools will receive an incentive of £500 once all pupil data, required for the evaluation, has been submitted. This can be then used to purchase PALS-UK programme, once the trial is completed.

Reading attainment will be measured for both groups in the summer term of Year 5 using the New PiRA Year 5 Summer Test. Secondary outcomes will include pupils' oral reading fluency and reading comprehension, assessed through the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – III for Teachers (WIAT-III UK-T). Additionally, pupils' reading engagement will be evaluated using the Reading Engagement Scale instrument (McGeown et al., 2025). Finally, in the summer of the following year, reading attainment at age 11 will be examined using the KS2 Reading NCT scaled score obtained from the NPD.

Participant selection

The evaluation will focus on pupils who will enter Year 5 in September 2026 in recruited primary schools. The delivery team aims to recruit 250 schools. Candidate pupils will be identified during Year 4 so that the full cohort is known in advance of randomisation and programme delivery. If no attrition is observed, we would expect a total sample of 10,626 pupils (based on 25 pupils per class and 1.7 classes per school).

Schools

Schools that are State-funded primary schools located anywhere in England are eligible to participate in the study, but with the following schools excluded:

- Schools taking part in another EEF literacy project targeting the cohort of pupils who will be in Year 4 in the 2025-26 academic year and Year 5 in the 2026-27 academic year.
- Schools taking part in another EEF trial or evidence partnerships at KS2 regardless of domain due to excessive burden on schools
- Schools that took part in the previous EEF-funded PALS-UK trials, both Culora et al., (2022) and Lewin et al., (2024), who were allocated to the intervention group
- Schools that are using or have used PALS-UK

Smaller schools with mixed classes will be included in the trial provided they have a minimum of 2 eligible Year 5 pupils, with caution taken during recruitment so that their number are not disproportionately high in the trial. Finally, while the PALS-UK manual can be purchased online, it can only be purchased from the delivery team, which prevents schools independently accessing the programme during the study.

Pupils

All pupils who are expected to enter Year 5 in September 2026 will form the focal pupil cohort for the study. To ensure the sample is fully defined ahead of randomisation, pupil identities (names and UPNs) will be confirmed during the recruitment period, as schools join the project and complete the required agreements with the delivery and evaluation teams.

Enumeration will be undertaken between February and August 2026 using FFT's Aspire system, supported by an additional manual confirmation process. This will allow the evaluation team to verify all pupils who are in Year 4 at the time of recruitment and are due to move into Year 5 on 1 September 2026. Pupils can be withdrawn from the study by their parents/carers at any time. Those pupils, as well as the pupils joining after the baseline assessment, will not be included in the evaluation.

Recruitment

The recruitment process will begin with schools expressing interest in joining the study by completing an online form. Once a school makes contact, the delivery team will review its details to confirm that it meets the eligibility requirements. To participate, schools must meet the following criteria:

- Be a state-maintained primary school with pupils in Year 5
- Be a school in England
- Must not currently be delivering similar programmes that may conflict with the trial. This includes schools taking part in another KS2 EEF reading/writing or literacy trial, OAK AI, or research school partnership over the school years 2025/26 and 2026/27

- Must NOT have used PALS-UK or received training on PALS-UK previously.

At this stage, core information will be gathered from each school, including its name, address, URN, contact details, and headteacher and named contact information (name and email).

Schools that meet the criteria will then receive a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlining the aims of the project, anticipated benefits, required activities, the timeline for delivery, and the respective responsibilities of schools, the delivery partner, and the evaluation team. A school will be formally enrolled in the study once the MoU has been signed and returned to the delivery team. Together with the MoU, participating schools will also complete a Data Sharing Agreement that defines how personal data will be collected, shared, and safeguarded between the delivery team, the evaluation team, and the school. Following enrolment, the delivery team will pass the school's information to FFT and MMU.

After this, schools will distribute information sheets and opt-out forms to parents of pupils due to enter Year 5. Parents will have two weeks to withdraw their child from the study after they receive these forms. During this period, and thereafter for any late withdrawals, schools must maintain an internal record of pupils who do not consent and ensure that no personal data for these pupils are shared with FFT, MMU, or AlphaPlus (AlphaPlus are responsible for collecting assessment data at endline and baseline). If a withdrawal occurs after the initial two-week window, schools will notify MMU through a secure process so that any data already received can be removed. Once the opt-out window closes, FFT will obtain pupil-level data for all remaining eligible pupils. These data will be reviewed for completeness before being transferred to MMU for final verification.

Outcome measures

Baseline measures

The New PiRA Summer term Year 4 test is the baseline measure of reading attainment. PiRA is UK-standardised and EEF-shortlisted with good internal reliability, reported in the EEF assessment database to range from .75 to .92 depending on the version of the test (EEF, 2021). It also has good construct validity, designed to align with the national curriculum content domains for reading. Although PiRA is not a direct assessment of oral reading fluency and reading comprehension, it will be used as a general baseline measure of reading attainment and as the baseline measure for analyses of oral reading fluency and reading comprehension outcomes. Evidence of criterion-related validity is available from a 2021-22 national test indicator study, which examined the relationship between New PiRA Year 6 scores and KS2 National Test scaled scores and produced regression-based conversion tables (Hachette, 2022). However, correlation coefficients have not been published. New PiRA can be administered to the whole class in 40-50 minutes and is designed around termly expectations. To avoid technical issues when using the New PiRA Digital we will use the paper-based New PiRA, which will be administered by teachers and teaching assistants, in class, at baseline. Clear guidance will be provided to teachers to ensure correct input of pupils' data, as well as the secure storage and transfer of completed test scripts. The guidance will also clarify the level of support that is permissible to offer to pupils (as set out in the New PiRA manual)

The Reading Engagement Scale (RES) (McGeown & Conradi Smith, 2024) will be used as a baseline measure of reading engagement, administered online. It takes 10 minutes to administer and has four sub-scales: behavioural, cognitive, affective and social engagement. The first,

behavioural engagement, probes reading behaviours, i.e. how frequently pupils read, how long they read for and the breadth of their reading activities. The second, cognitive engagement, measures pupils' level of cognitive effort while reading, including the extent to which they use cognitive strategies to support reading comprehension. The third, affective engagement, measures the depth of emotions that pupils experience when reading. The final dimension, social engagement, measures pupils' participation in different types of reading activities with others. Each dimension has six quantitative items. In the original version of the scale, published in 2024, these items used a 4 point-scale. However, through discussion with the delivery team, it was decided that the revised version of the scale would be used. The scale author informed the delivery team that from their experience, a 7-point scale, which they recently piloted, was likely to be more sensitive to longitudinal changes in reading engagement. The content of the questions remains the same; it is just the rating scale which has been amended to give a more fine-grained measure.

In addition to the quantitative scale items, there is a question asking pupils which genres they read (to provide information about breadth of reading) and an open-ended question, asking pupils if there is anything else they would like to say about their experiences of reading books. These two questions will be included to gather additional information about pupils' reading but will not form part of the reading engagement score used in the main analysis.

The published version of the scale has acceptable or close to acceptable values of reliability: behavioural: $\alpha = 0.668$; affective $\alpha = 0.765$; cognitive $\alpha = 0.611$; and social $\alpha = 0.786$ (McGeown & Smith, 2024). Validity measures have yet to be published.

Primary outcome

The New PiRA is the primary outcome. It aligns to the Theory of Change (ToC) and was sensitive enough to detect the impact of PALS-UK in the efficacy trial (Lewin et al., 2024). PiRA is structured around eight content domains. Of these 'comprehension', 'summary, and prediction' are likely to be highly sensitive to PALS-UK given that retelling supports comprehension (Dunst et al., 2012). Paragraph shrinking focuses on the main ideas, which is part of 'summarising', and prediction relay supports 'prediction' (Fuchs et al., 1997). Other domains, while not a focus, may also be improved. For example, fluency gains free up cognitive resources for comprehension (Klauda and Guthrie, 2008) and improvements in vocabulary (Yildirim et al., 2013).

PiRA will be administered by teachers and teaching assistants at endline. The assessment will not be piloted as the evaluation team have used the same test previously in other trials in Year 4 and Year 5.

Secondary outcomes

Secondary measures are a) oral reading fluency, b) reading comprehension, c) reading engagement.

The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – III for Teachers (WIAT-III UK-T) will be used to measure oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. These measures were sensitive to the effects of the intervention in the efficacy trial (Lewin, et al. 2024). We propose not including the multi-dimensional fluency (MDFS) used for the previous study - it was not sensitive to PALS-UK (Lewin, et al. 2024).

WIAT-III UK-T oral reading fluency subtest measures reading speed and accuracy. The WIAT-III UK-T reading comprehension subtest measures pupils' ability to respond to comprehension questions. We propose administration at baseline.

In the efficacy trial, the Feelings about Reading Questionnaire (FAR) was used to measure self-efficacy and motivation. We propose a different scale for this study due to the lack of effect on FAR measures in the efficacy study (Lewin, et al. 2024). Instead, we will use the Reading Engagement Scale (RES) (McGeown & Conradi Smith, 2024). This scale is relatively new and so it is not included in the EEF attainment measures database, but aligns closely with the logic model. The logic model predicts that PALS-UK will increase pupils' use of reading strategies – aligning with the cognitive engagement dimension of the scale. It also predicts increases in interest and confidence in reading, which we might expect the behavioural and affective dimensions of the scale to be sensitive to. In addition, we might expect the social engagement part of the scale to be sensitive to the social nature of the intervention, namely, that pupils read and construct meanings from texts together regularly. See Baseline measures section for further details.

KS2 reading scores will be analysed from the National Pupil Database (NPD) as a follow-up measure.

A summary of the baseline and baseline measures (covariates) is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of endline measures and associated pre-test baseline measures to be used as covariates

Endline Construct	Endline measure	Period	Baseline measure (pre-test covariate)	
			Construct	Measure
Reading attainment at age 10	New PiRA Summer term Year 5 test	June/July 2027	Reading attainment	New PiRA Summer term Year 4 test
Oral reading fluency (speed and accuracy)	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – III for Teachers (WIAT-III UK-T)	June/July 2027	Reading attainment	New PiRA Summer term Year 4 test
Reading comprehension	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – III for Teachers (WIAT-III UK-T)	June/July 2027	Reading attainment	New PiRA Summer term Year 4 test
Reading engagement	Reading Engagement Scale (RES)	June/July 2027	Reading engagement	Reading Engagement Scale (RES)
Reading attainment at age 11	KS2 Reading NCT scaled score from the NPD	May 2028	Reading attainment (containing imputed values for missing responses if applicable)	New PiRA Summer term Year 4 test

Sample size

The estimated minimum detectable effect sizes (MDES) for both the overall sample and the subgroup of pupils ever eligible for Free School Meals is shown in Table 3, with expected attrition rates in Table 4. The MDES is presented under two analytical conditions: one assuming no attrition and another incorporating a 10% attrition at the school and pupil levels. The MDES represents the smallest true effects that the study design would be sufficiently powered to detect (at 80% power) while maintaining a 95% confidence threshold for statistical significance.

Table 3: Sample size calculations

		Overall		FSM	
		No attrition	With expected attrition	No attrition	With expected attrition
Minimum Detectable Effect Size (MDES)		0.09	0.09	0.10	0.11
Pre-test/ post-test correlations	level 1 (pupil)	0.74		0.74	
	level 2 (class)	-		-	
	level 3 (school)	0.76		0.76	
Intraclass correlations (ICCs)	level 2 (class)	-		-	
	level 3 (school)	0.12		0.12	
Alpha		0.05		0.05	
Power		0.8		0.8	
One-sided or two-sided?		Two-sided		Two-sided	
Average cluster size		42		14	
Number of schools	Intervention	125	112	125	112
	Control	125	112	125	112
	Total	250	224	250	224
Number of pupils	Intervention	5,313	4,760	1,700	1,523
	Control	5,313	4,760	1,700	1,523
	Total	10,626	9,520	3,400	3,046

The minimum detectable effect sizes (MDES) were derived using the PowerUp software (Dong & Maynard, 2013). Calculations were informed by several key assumptions:

- Hypothesis testing employs a two-tailed 95% significance level and aims for statistical power of 80%.
- The study design involves random allocation of schools to intervention and control conditions in equal proportions.
- The projected recruitment target is 250 schools, with an anticipated mean number of pupils per school of 42 and mean number of pupils eligible for FSM of 14
- All pupils in the sample provide baseline and endline test results.

Table 4: Expected Attrition

	School level	Pupil level
Expected attrition (%)	10%	10%

Evidence from prior PALS-UK efficacy trial indicates pre- to post-test correlations typically fall between 0.70 and 0.77 across pupil and school levels (Lewin et al., 2024). On the basis that we use the same pre and post-test measures here as Lewin et al., (2024) the same correlations are assumed in our calculations. Additionally, drawing on findings from earlier EEF trials, the intra-cluster correlation (ICC) at the school level is set at 0.12.

Using these assumptions and assuming no attrition, the MDES for the full sample is estimated at 0.09, increasing to 0.10 for pupils ever eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Under the 10% attrition scenario, the MDES remains the same for the overall sample and 0.11 for the ever-FSM subgroup.

Randomisation

Subsequent to the recruitment of schools, enumeration of pupils within schools and the collection of baseline measures, randomisation will be conducted. Before randomisation, however, we will in addition draw a random sample of 15 pupils per school in order to obtain 8 observations per school on reading fluency and comprehension measures at endline¹.

Whole schools will be randomised to intervention and control conditions on a 1:1 basis. Randomisation will be stratified to achieve balance by region. These regions are:

- North-West England
- North-East England
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- West Midlands
- East Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South-East England
- South-West England

Randomisation is stratified by region so that the delivery team can anticipate in advance roughly how any teachers/schools will attend training in a particular region.

The randomisation will be conducted in STATA statistical software by a qualified researcher based at Manchester Metropolitan University, who is independent of the project team, and who is blind to the identities of the schools.

We will use the Stata command ``randtreat`` (Carril, 2017) to perform stratified randomisation and manage "misfits"—instances where the number of schools in a stratum is not divisible by

¹ The sample for endline testing using the WIAT-III test instrument is required due to the expense associated with sending trained test administrators to schools to administer the tests. A sample of pupils for endline testing is selected prior to randomisation. This sample consists of 15 pupils chosen at random from a single class per school. On the day of endline testing, the relevant list of pupils is provided to test administrators. On attending the school to administer the tests, they are asked to work down the list, which is arranged in random order, until they have achieved eight assessments.

the number of groups. This global approach ensures balance across the entire sample. To ensure transparency and prevent modifications, the randomisation code will be documented in a Stata do-file and published in the project statistical analysis plan.

Statistical analysis

Primary analysis

The analytical sample file will contain variables capturing the primary outcome measure at both endline and baseline, a treatment receipt indicator variable and a variable capturing the strata used in randomisation. We index individual pupils with the subscript i where $i = 1, \dots, N$ and the total sample size $N = N_T + N_C$, where N_T and N_C are the total numbers of pupils in the treatment and control arms of the study. The random allocation ration is 1:1 therefore $N_T = N_C = N/2$. There will be J schools in the study, indexed $j = 1, \dots, J$.

The target estimand for the primary analysis is the average effect of assignment to treatment on pupils across the schools and regions in the study. The primary outcome analysis will follow the intention to treat principle. It will be an adjusted analysis, where the estimated average treatment effect of PALS-UK on reading attainment will be obtained from a mixed linear regression model of the following form:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_j + \beta_2 X_{ij} + \beta_3 S_j + u_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Y_{ij} is the raw PiRA endline test score for pupil i in school j . T_j is a treatment school indicator, coded to '1' where school j is assigned to treatment, zero otherwise. X_{ij} is the baseline PiRA test score for pupil i in school j and S_j a school-level stratum indicator. The model contains two conditional random effects u_j and ε_{ij} at the school and pupil levels, which we assume are iid (independent and identically distributed) as follows:

$$u_j \sim N(0, \sigma_{u|X}^2)$$

$$\varepsilon_{ij} \sim N(0, \sigma_{\varepsilon|X}^2)$$

The total conditional variance of Y is $\sigma_{Y|X}^2 = \sigma_{u|X}^2 + \sigma_{\varepsilon|X}^2$ and therefore the intraclass correlation coefficient is:

$$ICC = \frac{\sigma_{u|X}^2}{\sigma_{u|X}^2 + \sigma_{\varepsilon|X}^2}$$

This is the proportion of the total variance of Y that is between schools. The β s are the unknown parameters to be estimated and $\hat{\beta}_1$ the sample estimate of the effect of PALS-UK on the primary outcome.

The model will be estimated in STATA v19.5 using the command 'mixed' and restricted maximum likelihood.

Secondary analysis

Secondary analysis will be performed using a similar approach to that of the primary analysis. The estimated average treatment effect of PALS-UK on a particular secondary outcome will be obtained from a mixed linear regression model as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_j + \beta_2 X_{ij} + \beta_3 S_j + u_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Where respectively Y_{ij} represents student i in school j 's score on one of the following outcomes (one model for each outcome):

- Oral reading fluency (speed and accuracy)
- Reading comprehension
- Reading engagement
- Reading attainment at age 11 (addendum report only)

In the outcome models for oral reading fluency and reading comprehension, X_{ij} will be student i in school j 's score on baseline reading attainment. For all other models, X_{ij} will be the baseline score for the endline outcome measure (i.e. for endline outcome measures for which we have pre and post observations).

Effect sizes and their 95% confidence intervals will be obtained using the same approach as that for the primary outcome analysis.

Estimation of effect sizes

The sample estimate of the effect of PALS-UK from the adjusted analysis will be converted to an effect size in the following way:

$$ES = \frac{\hat{\beta}_1}{\sqrt{\sigma_u^2 + \sigma_\varepsilon^2}}$$

Where σ_u^2 and σ_ε^2 are unconditional variances obtained from an empty variance components model. 95% confidence interval for the effect size will be obtained by dividing the upper and lower limits of the confidence interval on the estimated effect direct from the regression by the denominator in the effect size equation above.

Sub-group analyses

Exploratory analysis will comprise estimating both absolute and relative subgroup treatment effects for the following subgroups:

- Ever-FSM
- SEND
- High attainers (upper quartile of the baseline PIRA score distribution)
- Low attainers (lower quartile of the baseline PIRA score distribution)

The absolute effect of PALS-UK on reading attainment for each subgroup will be estimated by running the following regression conditioning on the subsample comprising the relevant subgroup:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_j + \beta_2 X_{ij} + \beta_3 S_j + u_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

So, for the ever-FSM subgroup analysis we will run the model on ever-FSM subgroup observations only. For relative estimates we include a subgroup indicator in the outcome model along with an interaction between this and the treatment group indicator, in the case of the ever-FSM subgroup analysis giving us:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_j + \beta_2 X_{ij} + \beta_3 S_j + \beta_4 FSM_{ij} + \beta_5 FSM_{ij} \times T_j + u_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Where the sample estimate $\hat{\beta}_5$ is the focus of attention.

Effect size will be estimated for each subgroup and the interaction models.

Analysis in the presence of non-compliance

We do not anticipate schools assigned to the control group being able to access PALS-UK for the duration of the trial, therefore non-compliance if it occurs, will do so only among schools assigned to the intervention.

A school is regarded as compliant if both the initial teacher training day and 4-weeks pupil training are completed. Thus, a non-compliant school will be an intervention schools in which one or both forms of training have not been completed. Any engagement with PALS-UK beyond this could in theory generate some benefit for those exposed even if they do not receive the full dose of the treatment.

Compliance is a school level measure and will be captured as a binary indicator coded '1' if the school is compliant, zero otherwise. This indicator will be constructed from data collected by the delivery team drawing on email exchanges with intervention schools, teacher top-up training attendance registers, and teacher logs.

Compliance analysis will be carried out using the two-stage least squares instrumental variables approach with cluster robust standard errors, where random assignment serves as an instrument for compliance. If D_{ij} captures whether pupil i in school j is compliant, the first stage regression model is a linear probability model of the following form:

$$D_{ij} = \pi_0 + \pi_1 T_j + \pi_2 X'_{ij} + v_{ij}$$

Where T_j is the intervention group indicator and X'_{ij} a vector of baseline covariates that will include the reading attainment baseline score, region variable, FSM and SEND indicators as well as past prior attainment at the school level. The fitted value for D_{ij} , $\hat{D}_{ij}$ is then including in a second stage regression model as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 \hat{D}_{ij} + \beta_3 X'_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij}$$

The sample estimate of β_2 can be interpreted as an estimate of the complier average causal effect or a local average treatment effect. Because there is no non-compliance possible in the control group, this estimate can also be interpreted as the average effect of treatment on those treated.

An important diagnostic will be the F statistic from an F-test which ideally should be at 10 or greater. Moerbeek & Schie (2019) point out that complier average causal effects estimated in this way can be problematic when association between T_j and D_j in the first stage regression is weak.

Additional analyses and robustness checks

In addition to estimating the primary model, the analysis will incorporate a set of additional models. The following models will be fitted with the reading attainment as the response variable:

1. An empty model, used to calculate effect size (ES).
2. A model containing the intervention variables only, which examines the influence of covariates on modelled estimates.

3. Re-estimation of the primary outcome model using linear OLS regression, correcting for clustering of the sample using hc2 clustered standard errors. It will confirm the direction and size of effect in a less complex model. While we should not expect the two models to produce exactly the same parameter estimates, they should be close. The OLS regression results can be considered population average estimates, whilst the multilevel regression output, cluster specific estimates. This model will act as a benchmark against which the results of the compliance and missing data analysis can be compared.
4. A sensitivity analysis will be conducted by re-estimating the primary outcome model after excluding federated schools, but only if federated schools are allocated across different trial arms. Federated schools may share leadership, staff, or implementation practices across settings, which could reduce the independence of clusters and potentially influence programme delivery or outcomes across arms. Excluding these schools will allow us to assess whether findings are influenced by organisational links between schools.
5. We will compare the distributions of all baseline covariates between trial arms in the as-analysed sample. We will identify any covariates for which differences in means or proportions between the two arms are statistically significant at the 5% level. Any such covariates will be included as additional independent variables in an impact regression model, with reading attainment as the dependent variable and the intervention indicator and baseline reading attainment also entered as predictors. This model will assess the extent to which the estimated intervention effect is sensitive to adjustment for baseline imbalances arising from random variation or from differential attrition.

Finally, the graphical diagnostics, such as histograms of the primary outcome measures alongside quantile–quantile (QQ) plots of the standardised residuals—will be examined to assess the normality assumptions. Complementing this, plots of standardised residuals against predicted values will be reviewed to check for independence of the residuals.

Missing data analysis

The purpose of the missing data analysis will be to attempt to identify some aspects of the missing data processes that may be present in the data, and to assess their consequences for the primary outcome analysis.

The first stage will be to calculate the rates of missing data at the pupil level in both arms of the trial and compare them. If the overall rate of missingness, across both trial arms in aggregate exceeds 5 per cent we will conduct further analysis to attempt to understand the attrition processes at play.

This will first involve the descriptive analysis. For records for which we have baseline covariates, but a missing endline observation on the primary outcome (that is attritors), we will compare baseline covariate means and proportions, for attritors to those retained in the sample, for intervention and control arms separately. Attention will be paid to any differences in the mean scores at baseline on the baseline reading attainment scores, for attritors and the retained, by trials arm, as patterns of missingness are likely to be a good indicator of the consequences for endline reading attainment.

Following this we will fit a logistic regression model to the data, the so called drop out model, where the dependent variable is a binary indicator capturing whether a sampled pupils failed to

provide a reading attainment observation at endline. This model will reveal the extent to which covariates are predictive of attrition.

If missingness exceeds 5% across the trial arms and covariates explain missingness, sensitivity tests will use Multiple Imputation by Chained Equations (MICE) to assess the impact of missingness and the extent to which it is missing at random (MAR). If missingness is suspected to be missing not at random (MNAR), sensitivity analyses using Lee bounds (Lee, 2009) will estimate treatment effect bounds under minimal assumptions (randomisation and monotonicity). Lee bounds provide upper and lower estimates for the always-responding subsample, addressing non-random attrition. These will be estimated using the `leebounds` package in STATA v19.5.

Detailed methods for missing data analysis, including MI and Lee bounds, will be specified in the SAP.

Implementation and process evaluation (IPE) design

The IPE will explain the results of the impact evaluation and capture whether real-world conditions affect implementation fidelity, quality, responsiveness, acceptability, and outcomes. The ToC will be reviewed alongside IPE findings, and evidence presented on how it holds in relation to real world conditions, variable inputs, delivery capacities, and contextual factors such as policy alignment, school capacity, and school readiness.

Implementation within the context of an effectiveness trial, rather than implementation under ideal conditions, gives rise to greater variability and contextual adaptation. It is therefore crucial to capture implementation variability and causal relationships with moderators and contextual factors. We will assess whether the implementation support model is suitable for use at scale and describe adaptations made; barriers and facilitators to future uptake of the programme; and whether the core components driving impact are retained at scale.

We will adopt a mixed methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected through pre- and post-intervention surveys administered to headteachers and teachers, alongside case studies of two participating schools in each region (ten in total). These case-study schools will be visited twice and will include observations of PALS-UK sessions, interviews with head teachers, class teachers and peer observers, and pupil focus groups. The IPE will also review materials provided to teachers to support the delivery of PALS-UK, as well as data collected by the delivery team through teacher surveys and related activities. Observation logs the school-nominated peer observer will provide are an additional key data source, informing understanding of implementation fidelity across all intervention schools. Finally, interviews will be conducted with members of the delivery team.

Research questions

The research questions the IPE aims to address are as follows with associated IPE dimensions in brackets.

- RQ1 Was PALS-UK implemented as planned?
- a. Training for intervention teachers. This will include exploring whether the training by the PALS-UK team was delivered as intended, and teacher perceptions of the training in terms of preparation for intervention implementation
 - b. Classroom practice. This will include exploring whether schools maintained fidelity to pupil pairing, dosage, and the ways this influenced pupil reading attainment (usual practice, fidelity, dosage, quality)
- RQ2 What adaptations were made to the programme by teachers? How did this influence outcomes? (fidelity, quality, adaptation)
- RQ3 How do schools and teachers experience PALS-UK, and what are the barriers and facilitators to implementation?
- RQ4 How do teachers perceive PALS-UK, including perceptions of impact on pupils?
- a. Teacher knowledge about reading, their confidence and ability to improve reading.
 - b. Pupils' reading comprehension, oral reading fluency, overall reading attainment and attitudes to reading.
 - c. Pupils' capacity for comprehension monitoring and how might this mediate any impacts of reading engagement and reading attainment.

- d. Peer interactions and relationships.
- e. Schools' overall reading culture.
- f. Outcomes for SEND and FSM pupils; and low vs high attainers specifically as groups of interest. (reach, quality, participant responsiveness, perceived impact).

RQ5 How do pupils perceive the programme, and respond to it, including the experience of FSM and SEND pupils? In particular, how (if at all) do pupils perceive PALS-UK to have influenced:

- a. Their reading comprehension, oral reading fluency, overall reading attainment and attitudes to reading.
- b. Their capacity for comprehension monitoring and how this might mediate any impacts on reading engagement and reading attainment.
- c. Peer interactions and relationships.
- d. The reading culture within their class/school. (fidelity, reach, participant responsiveness, acceptability, perceived impact)

RQ6 Were there any unintended outcomes? (perceived impact, unintended outcomes)

RQ7 How does PALS-UK compare with business-as-usual practice? (monitoring of control/intervention group, context, barriers and facilitators)

Research methods

Adaptation was an important dimension in the efficacy trial IPE (Lewis et al. 2024). It was sometimes unclear from teachers' responses in interviews and surveys, which pupil groups required programme adaptation and the extent of this. For example, teachers often talked about 'lower ability readers' who may not have SEND and 'SEND' pupils (those who don't necessarily have reading difficulties but may or may not need adaptations to engage with PALS-UK) interchangeably, so it was not always clear which needs were being adapted for. In the previous trial Adaptations included: changes to the timing of the activities; shortening the length of the overall session (due to time pressures in schools); and reducing time on prediction relay and retell due to pupil disengagement/pupils finding it challenging (Lewin et al. 2024). This will be further explored through this IPE, and pupil engagement over time will be investigated explicitly within the teacher surveys, pupil focus groups and teacher interviews. Survey responses about adaptations will be correlated with outcome data to assess possible influences on outcomes.

The efficacy trial IPE involved one lesson observation by the evaluation team focusing on fidelity. A second observation (in visit 2) with a focus on adaptations made by teachers and pupil engagement as the programme nears the end. A key issue is how the programme can be rolled out without the level of support provided for schools in the trial context. We will pay particular attention to schools that are able to implement the programme successfully with minimum support, such as schools that do not access the top-up training sessions provided, or the additional packs of books, and assess the conditions necessary for this.

Observations by peer teachers will take place as part of the delivery, as in the first trial. We will review this process and the observation fidelity checklist with the delivery team, accounting for lessons learned. As well as identifying what literacy activities take place in control schools, it will also be important to understand what PALS-UK replaces in intervention schools. Whether PALS-UK substitutes for existing provision or compliments/enhances it is key to interpreting results from the impact evaluation.

Data collection methods

Key activities:

Pre-test

- o Headteacher survey (intervention/control)
 - o Teacher survey (intervention/control) – currently literacy practices and teacher confidence.
- Observe 3 initial training events.
- Observe 3 top-up training events.
- Interviews with the delivery team post-observation of the top-up training events.
- Review documentation (manual/resources, pairing logs, observation checklists).

At the start of the intervention:

- Case studies (at least 2 schools per region, 2 half-day visits, one at the start of implementation in December 2026, and one towards the end in April - May 2027²). Each visit includes:
 - o Observation of delivery of PALS-UK session at the start of intervention implementation (30-35 minutes).
 - In multi-entry schools we will aim to observe two classes implementing PALS-UK. This will depend on timing of lessons, whether the classes run concurrently and whether we're able to send more than one researcher to the school.
 - o 20-minute teacher interview with all teachers implementing PALS-UK. If we are unable to interview teachers separately, we will offer to conduct a paired interview.
 - o 20-minute headteacher interview.
 - o 20-minute pupil focus group (6-8 students).
 - o 20-minute peer observer interview (second visit only).

Post-test

- o Headteacher survey intervention (current literacy practices, other programmes, perceptions of PALS-UK, costs)
- o Headteacher survey control (current literacy practices, other programmes)
- o Teacher survey intervention - implementation (training/support, barriers, enablers, experience, perceived impact)
- o Teacher survey control – usual practice
- o Interview delivery team.

The baseline surveys for headteachers will be administered in June 2026 and completed by mid-July 2026. The survey to teachers will be administered in September 2026 after randomisation. Teachers acting as a peer observer from single form entry schools will also be asked to complete the survey. The surveys will elicit data about current literacy practices and knowledge including:

- o current literacy practices including other reading programmes delivered in the school
- o school reading culture
- o knowledge of the process of learning to read.

² We will endeavour to complete the first set of case study visits in December 2026. However, given the number of visits the team is conducting we may have to spread data collection over a two month period into January.

At the end of the intervention, headteachers at intervention schools will be asked to complete an online survey (no longer than 20-30 minutes). This will elicit data about the impact of PALS-UK on the school and the costs involved. Questions will explore:

- current literacy practices including other reading programmes delivered in the school
- aside from PALS-UK what changes in literacy practices took place in 2026/27 (planned and unplanned)
- perceived impact on the school reading culture
- perceived impact of PALS-UK on pupils
- planned future literacy practice.

At the end of the intervention, headteachers at *control schools* will be asked to complete an online survey (no longer than 15-20 minutes). The purpose of this survey is to establish whether or not business as usual has been maintained in relation to teaching reading. This survey will elicit data about:

- current literacy practices including other reading programmes delivered in the school
- what changes in literacy practices took place in 2026/27 (planned and unplanned)
- CPD offered during 2026/27 in relation to teaching reading
- future plans teaching reading.

All Year 5 teachers in intervention schools will be asked to complete a survey after the intervention has been delivered (no longer than 20-30 minutes). Teachers acting as a peer observers will also be asked to complete the survey. The survey is designed to gather teachers' perceptions about the delivery of PALS-UK. The teacher survey will elicit data about:

- current literacy practices including other reading programmes delivered in the school;
- estimated pupil time spent on reading instruction and reading practice each week;
- experiences of PALS-UK training (initial and top-up) and resources
- dosage (delivery of 4 weeks x 3 sessions pupil training, delivery of 16 weeks x 3 sessions of full PALS-UK sessions)
- the pupil pairing process
- adaptations made
- additional packs of books ordered
- identified gaps in the programme and how they were addressed
- perceived enablers, challenges and benefits of PALS-UK and specifically SLT support
- perceived impact of PALS-UK on:
 - school reading culture
 - how they teach reading
 - their pupils' reading for pleasure habits

All Year 5 teachers in *control schools* will be asked to complete a survey at the end of the intervention period (no longer than 15-20 minutes). The purpose of this survey is to establish whether or not business as usual has been maintained in relation to teaching reading. This survey will elicit data about:

- current literacy practices including other reading programmes delivered in the school (to be compared with responses to baseline survey)
- the extent to which current literacy practices have developed over the year (i.e. has business as usual changed in any way)

- estimated pupil time spent on reading instruction and reading practice each week
- formal and informal CPD relating to teaching reading undertaken in 206/27.

The delivery team will also be interviewed to elicit their perceptions on the delivery of PALS-UK, the training and support offered, any adaptations made, barriers and challenges and how they were addressed, and the impact of PALS-UK on schools, teachers and pupils.

Training and support are essential for successful implementation. We will observe three initial training sessions and three top-up training sessions, with structured field notes serving as the primary data source. In addition, the training documentation (for example manuals) and support materials (e.g., videos) provided to teachers will be reviewed. Attendance records from the training, top-up sessions, and other support activities from the delivery team will be analysed. The delivery team will also carry out short surveys and activities related to training and support to inform their ongoing work. These data will be shared with the evaluation team, providing valuable insight into teachers' perceptions of the training and support they received.

Ten intervention schools will be selected at random to participate in case studies. Selection will be stratified by region, school size (single-entry or multi-entry), rural/urban location, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (grouped into terciles). Since participation in a case study places an additional workload on the school compared with a non-case study school, it is possible that some schools who are invited to be a case study may choose not to take part in this aspect of the trial. If this is the case, schools will be replaced until a sample size of ten is met.

Case study data will enrich our understanding of findings; guide design of any subsequent scale-up strategy; and help ensure effectiveness and practicality across varied settings. Case study data will also identify those elements which are consistently effective, and which need to be adapted. They will show how schools integrate the programme with existing systems, the types of support practitioners find valuable, and the systemic or logistical challenges at scale. Case studies will be instrumental in developing a scale-up model that is grounded in evidence and context sensitive — increasing chances of success and sustainability. We will visit each of the case study schools twice. During these case study visits we will observe PALS-UK in the classroom and interview head teachers and teachers. This will also provide an opportunity to talk to pupils.

The first visit will take place at the start of the PALS-UK programme (December 2026 - January-2027) and the second will be towards the end of the programme (March-April 2027)³. During each visit the following activities will be undertaken:

- Observation of PALS-UK session (35 minutes)
- 20-minute teacher interview or a focus group if more than one year 5 teacher is involved in delivery
- 20-minute headteacher/senior leader interview
- 20-minute student focus groups (6-8 students, a different group each time)

³ Due to the number sites the team will visit, case study visits are spread over two months for both visits at the start of the intervention and post-intervention. This all takes account of December and April being short (due to holidays) and busy months for schools.

- 20-minute peer observer interview.

The headteacher will be sent interview questions in advance and will be advised to invite a senior manager with responsibility for literacy in KS2 to join the interview if deemed necessary. For example, if the headteacher feels there is someone else with more direct involvement with the programme who might be able to better respond to the questions.

Out of the schools that complete both baseline and endline teacher surveys, 20 will receive a £100 Amazon voucher and 12 will receive a £50 Amazon voucher. These will be randomly allocated as a 'thank you' for participating in the research activities. We made the decision to have different incentive amounts as a way of increasing the number of schools that could receive a voucher. We also thought that it might help to add an additional element of motivation to the task of survey completion. Eight case study schools will receive a £50 book voucher each on completion of the case study data collection.

Analysis

Quantitative data from closed survey questions will be analysed using SPSS to generate descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and graphical outputs. This will enable changes over time to be examined and comparisons to be made between intervention and control schools. Data from the 250 participating schools will be summarised and presented visually, including information on the use of other reading programmes, approaches to guided reading, perceived barriers and enablers to PALS-UK (at post-test), teachers' knowledge of reading, and their perceptions of their own reading practice. Patterns identified through the synthesis of quantitative data will be interpreted in relation to the IPE research questions and the logic model.

Qualitative data from open-ended survey responses, observations, interviews, and focus groups will be analysed using NVivo, applying Reflexive Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006; 2021; 2022). Interview data will be transcribed by a professional transcription service; full verbatim transcription (including pauses and stutters) is not considered necessary for the purposes of the IPE. A mixed coding approach will be adopted, combining deductive coding informed by the logic model (e.g. SLT support, teacher engagement, reading for pleasure, school reading culture) with inductive coding to allow for the identification of unanticipated mediators and outcomes. In line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidance on reflexive thematic analysis, analysis will begin with data familiarisation, followed by systematic coding and iterative development and refinement of themes. This interpretive process will support the identification of patterns in participants' experiences and perceptions, enabling the IPE research questions to be addressed (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). While the analysis will be primarily deductive and grounded in the logic model, it will also explore how factors such as SLT support influence programme delivery in practice and how potential implementation challenges might be mitigated.

Together, these data will ensure that the research questions are addressed using evidence from both intervention and control (business-as-usual) schools. Findings from the IPE will support the interpretation of impact analyses and provide a basis for generating further hypotheses about potential mediators and sources of heterogeneity in treatment effects. Particular attention will be paid to elements of the logic model that are not directly tested in the impact analyses, including SLT support, teacher engagement, peer support skills, pupil attitudes and confidence, engagement in reading for pleasure, school reading culture, and teachers' knowledge of reading. Both quantitative and qualitative IPE data will be drawn upon to explore these areas.

Rigorous analytical approaches, including statistical and thematic analysis, will be employed throughout. Quality assurance procedures will be implemented to ensure the reliability of IPE findings, including the provision of training for junior team members where required, clear documentation of analytical procedures, systematic record keeping, and regular team meetings to identify and resolve issues promptly.

Table 5: IPE methods overview

IPE dimension	RQ addressed	Research methods	Data collection methods	Sample size and sampling criteria	Data analysis methods
Usual practice: Baseline and Endline	RQ1, RQ7	Mixed methods	Surveys: Baseline and Endline	- All head teachers. Approx. 250 x 2 - All teachers. Approx 500 x 2	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Monitoring of control/intervention group	RQ7	Mixed methods	Surveys: Baseline and Endline	- All head teachers. Approx. 250 x 2 - All teachers. Approx 500 x 2	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Fidelity	RQ1, RQ2, RQ5		Observation field notes and checklists of initial training x 3 and top-up training x 3	- Delivery Team (2), All teachers who attend the initial training and top-up - Intervention only 125 +	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Field notes and structured observation of classroom practice	- Selected case study schools (Approx 14 teachers). At the start of the intervention and post intervention 10 schools x 2 visits at the start of the intervention and post-intervention (20 visits)	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observers	Approx. 10 head teachers. Approx 14 teachers (assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). At the	Mixed coding Thematic analysis

IPE dimension	RQ addressed	Research methods	Data collection methods	Sample size and sampling criteria	Data analysis methods
				start of and post intervention • 20 visits • 10peer observers. Post observation.⁴ • 10 visits x 2 at the start of the intervention and post-intervention (20 visits)	
			Case study focus group with pupils	• 6-8 pupils from each of the case study schools • At the start of and post intervention • C160 pupils	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Post-intervention survey	• All teachers and head teachers • Intervention only • 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Dosage	RQ1		Field notes and structured observation of classroom practice	• Selected case study schools (Approx 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). At start of and post intervention • 10visits x 2 (20 visits)	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observers	• Approx. 10head teachers, Approx. 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). At start of and post intervention • 20visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis

⁴ Post-observation in relation to the Peer Observers refers the observation of classroom practice conducted by the Peer Observers.

IPE dimension	RQ addressed	Research methods	Data collection methods	Sample size and sampling criteria	Data analysis methods
				10 peer observers. Post intervention 10 visits x2 (20 visits)	
			Post-intervention survey.	- Intervention teachers and head teachers 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Reach	R4, RQ5		Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observers	- Approx. 10 head teachers, Approx 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). At start of and post intervention 10 visits 10 peer observers. Post intervention 10visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Post-intervention survey	- Intervention teachers and head teachers 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Quality	RQ1, RQ2, RQ4		Observation field notes and checklists of initial training x 3 and top-up training x 3	- Delivery Team (2), All teachers - Intervention only 250+	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Delivery documentation, surveys and activities designed to support delivery of PALS-UK	- Documents provided to schools relating to PALS-UK; All teachers - Intervention only 250+	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Field notes and structured observation of classroom practice	- Selected case study schools - Post intervention	Mixed coding Thematic analysis

IPE dimension	RQ addressed	Research methods	Data collection methods	Sample size and sampling criteria	Data analysis methods
			Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observers	- Approx. 10 head teachers, 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). At start of and post intervention 20 visits 10 peer observers. Post intervention 10 visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Post-intervention survey	- Intervention teachers and head teachers 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Adaptation	RQ2		Observation field notes and checklists of initial training x 3 and top-up training x 3	- All teachers - Intervention 250+	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study interviews with teachers and peer observers. Post-intervention	- Approx. 10 head teachers 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). Post intervention 10 visits. 10 peer observers. Post intervention 8 visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Post-intervention survey	- Intervention teachers 250+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Participant responsiveness	RQ3, RQ4, RQ5		Observation field notes and checklists of initial training x 3 and top-up training x 3	- All teachers. - Intervention. 250+	Mixed coding Thematic analysis

IPE dimension	RQ addressed	Research methods	Data collection methods	Sample size and sampling criteria	Data analysis methods
			Field notes and structured observation of classroom practice	20 visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observers	- Approx. 10 head teachers 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). Post intervention 10 visits 10 peer observers. Post intervention 10 visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study focus group with pupils	6-8 pupils from each of the case study schools - Post intervention - Approx. 80	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Post-intervention survey. Intervention schools	- Intervention schools 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Context Barriers and Facilitators	RQ3, RQ7		Surveys: Baseline and Endline. Teachers and head teachers Intervention schools	- Intervention schools 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Field notes and structured observation of classroom practice	10 visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observers	- Approx. 10 head teachers, 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). Post intervention 10 peer observers. Post intervention	Mixed coding Thematic analysis

IPE dimension	RQ addressed	Research methods	Data collection methods	Sample size and sampling criteria	Data analysis methods
Acceptability	RQ3, RQ4, RQ5		Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observer	- Approx. 10 head teachers, Approx. 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). Post intervention 10 visits 10 peer observers. Post intervention 10 visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study focus group with pupils	6-8 pupils from each of the case study schools - Post intervention - Approx. 80	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Post-intervention survey. Intervention schools	- Intervention schools 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
Perceived impact	RQ4, RQ5, RQ6		Surveys: Endline. Intervention schools	- Intervention teachers and head teachers 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observers	- Approx. 10 head teachers. Approx. 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). Post intervention 10 visits 8 peer observers. Post intervention 10 visits	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study focus group with pupils	6-8 pupils from each of the case study schools - Post intervention - Approx. 80	Mixed coding Thematic analysis

IPE dimension	RQ addressed	Research methods	Data collection methods	Sample size and sampling criteria	Data analysis methods
Unintended outcomes	RQ6		Case study interviews with head teachers, teachers and peer observers	• Approx. 10 head teachers, 14 teachers, assuming case study schools have mix of single entry and multiple entry classes). . Post intervention • 10 visits • 10 peer observers. Post intervention • 10 visits Post intervention	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Case study focus group with pupils	• 6-8 pupils from each of the case study schools • Post intervention • Approx. 80	Mixed coding Thematic analysis
			Surveys: Endline. Intervention schools	• Intervention teachers and head teachers • 375+	Descriptive Cross-tabulations Mixed coding Thematic analysis

Cost evaluation design

Cost evaluation will determine the expenses associated with delivering the PALS-UK programme during the trial. The research questions derived from this objective are:

1. What are the estimated delivery costs of PALS-UK per school?
2. What are the estimated delivery costs of PALS-UK per pupil?
3. What would be the estimated cost per school and per pupil of implementing PALS-UK over three years?

Consequently, the cost evaluation takes the form of a Cost Feasibility analysis, serving as a guide to the affordability of PALS-UK, rather than a comparison between PALS-UK and an alternative reading programme. This cost will be averaged over a three-year period. The anticipated categorisation of ingredients included:

- Programme fees: This will reflect subscription fees, and school access to training and materials based on market value. Impact of the EEF subsidies during the trial and in subsequent years will be considered.
- Prerequisite costs.
- Staff time for teacher training, preparation, and delivery of PALS-UK, with a separate identification of the cost of new hires and supply staff.
- Any additional (unpaid) staff time supporting the delivery of PALS-UK

Costs will be divided into pre-requisites, start-up costs, and recurring costs in accordance with the EEF's cost evaluation guidance (EEF 2023). Programme fees calculation will rely on information provided by the Delivery Team. Additionally, cost data will be collected through post-intervention headteacher and teacher surveys participating in the implementation and process evaluation.

Ethics and registration

Ethical approval was obtained through Manchester Metropolitan University and granted on 2nd December 2025. Confirmation of acceptance of external ethical approval was obtained by Nottingham Trent University and the University of Birmingham in December 2025.

The process for ethical approval includes providing details about the project design, information about the ethical procedures that will be adopted, and copies of participant information sheets and consent/withdrawal forms. We also included the Memorandum of Understanding and privacy notices.

The school recruitment process is as follows. The delivery team will identify and approach schools across England that meet the inclusion criteria and will collect initial information, including the school's name, address, telephone number and URN, as well as the names and details of a key contact. Participating schools will be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the project's aims, anticipated benefits for schools, the timetable of activities, data protection arrangements, and the responsibilities of all parties involved. In addition, schools must sign a separate Data Sharing Acknowledgement detailing how personal data will be collected and shared between the Delivery Team, the Evaluation Team and the school. Schools will then issue a withdrawal notice to parents of all Year 4 pupils, allowing a two-week response period, although parents retain the right to withdraw their child at any time. Following this, FFT will collect baseline data from each participating school.

Data protection

Please see the [Data Protection Statement](#) for EEF Evaluations.

Manchester Metropolitan University will process the personal data of pupils and school staff for the purposes of this study and will act as evaluators. This processing is regulated by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

- Manchester Metropolitan University (ManMet, Evaluation team), and Nottingham Trent University (NTU, Delivery team) are independent data controllers for this project. They make decisions about how and what personal data is used in accordance with the purposes set by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)
- The University of Birmingham (UoB) Fischer Family Trust Education (FFT) and AlphaPlus are data processors. FFT and AlphaPlus have been sub-contracted by ManMet as data collectors. The EEF will become data controller of the archived data at the end of the project
- The Delivery team lead, Nottingham Trent University (NTU), is an independent Data Controller in respect of any personal data of pupils/and or school staff which they process for the purposes of the project

- The Delivery team partner, University of Birmingham, is a Data Processor for the Delivery team lead
- The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) becomes the Data Controller at the end of the project once the data is submitted to the EEF Data Archive, currently managed by FFT Education (Data Processor for the archive).

The Evaluation team have put appropriate security measures in place to keep personal data secure and to prevent any unauthorised access to or use of it. The Evaluation team and the Delivery team will collect and store all evaluation data in accordance with the UK Data Protection Legislation.

Data transferred between the Delivery and Evaluation teams will be via a secure transfer site. All research data will be held within a secure research area agreed with Manchester Metropolitan University's Head of Information Security. Any information identifying staff members collected via surveys, interviews or lesson observations will be given a unique code for each participant immediately after collection and prior to analysis to reduce risk.

No personal data for this project will be stored or transferred outside of the UK or European Economic Area (EEA).

For the purposes of archiving and further research, pupil-level impact data (e.g., reading test results) and pupils' personal data (e.g., name, date of birth, UPN) will be shared with EEF's Data Archive manager (FFT). FFT will match pupil records with the Pupil Matching Reference (PMR), an identifier that is stored in the National Pupil Database, and meaningless to anyone outside the Department for Education (DfE). All other personal data that can identify an individual pupil will be then deleted prior to archiving.

The remaining data will then be archived in the Office for National Statistics' Secure Research Service (ONS SRS). After anonymisation, data collected as part of evaluations funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) are archived in order to estimate the long-term impact of programmes. Data from interviews, questionnaires, and field notes will not be archived by the EEF.

The data processing is necessary for the parties to undertake a research project into the effectiveness of the PALS-UK with a focus on its impact on pupils in Year 5 (as of September 2026). This project is in the public's interest as the results will help assess the impact of the PALS-UK on pupils' reading comprehension and oral reading fluency.

Specifically, ManMet and NTU rely on the below processing conditions under the GDPR in order to process personal data (data which identifies someone such as name or date of birth) and special category personal data (sensitive data such as ethnicity) under this agreement.

We will not collect any special category (sensitive) personal information about you. Data collected will not be used for any automated decision making or profiling.

Personal data will be used throughout the duration of the project, including the analysis. The researchers will anonymise interview, questionnaire and field note data at the end of the project to be archived and will destroy all personal data about school staff they hold by July 31st 2029. Anonymised data will be held indefinitely for future research and analysis.

At the end of the project, data collected from surveys and interviews, will be anonymised and retained for 10 years for future research by Manchester Metropolitan University (July 31 2037).

Personnel

Delivery team: PALS-UK (Nottingham Trent University and the University of Birmingham)

Project Leader(s): Dr Emma Vardy, Suzannah Hemsley, Christian Farrell and Emma Coveney (Nottingham Trent University); and Prof Helen Breadmore and Dr Kristi Nourie (University of Birmingham).

Evaluation Team: (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Principle Investigators: Dr Helen Lawson (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Prof Stephen Morris (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Core fieldwork and analysis team: Dr Steph Ainsworth (Manchester Metropolitan University), Dr Kate Wicker (Manchester Metropolitan University), Dr Karolina Krzemieniewska-Nandwani, (Manchester Metropolitan University), Sandor Gellen (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Risks

Table 6: Project risks and mitigations

Risk	Probability (1=low, 2=medium & 3=high)	Impact (1-3)	Severity (probability impact)(1-9)?	Mitigation
Recruiting sufficient numbers of schools and competing priorities	2	2	4	We will ensure that the importance and benefits of participation are clearly communicated to schools to encourage take up. We will include incentives for participation. We will take an agile approach to recruitment and closely track progress, adapting recruitment strategies where necessary.
Missing data and sample attrition	3	2	6	Schools recruited to the trial may decide to withdraw, and this sample loss might both reduce precision of statistical estimates and introduce bias. Drawing on our experience and that of the developer, we will devise a strategy to limit attrition. Where attrition occurs, steps can be taken in analysis to test various assumptions regarding missingness and assess consequences for bias and precision (described above). Other sources of

				missingness can result from mis-recording of identifying data for pupils, mitigated through carrying out extensive checks on student records prior to randomisation.
Addressing and measuring compliance	2	2	4	In many studies, schools assigned to a programme fail to engage with it and those in the control group take part. To limit this, a strong communications strategy is required that emphasises the importance of schools engaging with the programme and stressing the benefits. It will be important to communicate expectations clearly to control schools given that they will have signed up to the project because of an identified need. Identifying what control schools do in relation to teaching reading during the evaluation will be essential. It will be important for us to work closely with the developers to arrive at a meaningful definition of compliance.
Staff shortages and retention in the evaluation team	2	2	4	Studies that run over extended periods will experience research staff turnover. We have a large number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, and flexible workload and staff management systems that will enable us to ensure this project is always appropriately staffed and managed
Poor communications between evaluators and developers	1	3	3	As part of our project planning, we will hold regular meetings with the developers with greater frequency around important milestones (e.g. school recruitment, enumeration, etc.). We will also share our project plans and risk management documents with the developer regularly and ensure our management processes align where possible with those of the project team ensuring collective and appropriate responses to emerging challenges.

Timeline

September 2025 – April 2029

Table 7: Timeline

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
Aug 2025 – Nov 2025	Start-up meetings/review theory of change/project set up	Helen Lawson/Stephen Morris
Aug 2025 – Nov 2025	Data governance/MoU, parental withdraw & data processing notices drafted and agreed	Helen Lawson
Nov 2025	Finalise trial/IPE design	Helen Lawson/Stephen Morris
Dec 2025	Ethical approval	Helen Lawson
Jan – May 2026	Recruitment	Emma Vardy
Jan – Jun 2026	Parent withdrawal process	Emma Vardy
Jan – Jun 2026	Data collection team requests data from schools	FFT Education
May – Jul 2026	Baseline assessments	Steph Ainsworth/Kate Wicker
Aug 2026	Subsampling for endline	Karolina Krzemieniewska-Nandwani

Aug 2026	Randomisation	Karolina Krzemieniewska-Nandwani
Sep 2026	Inform schools of outcome	Emma Vardy/Helen Breadmore
Sep 2026	Initial training for intervention schools	Emma Vardy/Helen Breadmore
Sep 2026	Observe initial training sessions	Helen Lawson
Oct 2026	SAP	Stephen Morris/Helen Lawson
Oct 2026 – Apr 2027	Intervention commences	Emma Vardy/Helen Breadmore/Schools
Oct 2026	Pupil training	Schools
Nov 2026	Top up training	Emma Vardy/Helen Breadmore
Nov 2026	Observe top up training	Helen Lawson
Nov 2026	Pupils commence full intervention period	Schools
Dec 2026	First case study visits	Helen Lawson
Apr 2027	Second case study visits	Helen Lawson
May 2027	Train post-test data collectors	Steph Ainsworth
May 2027	Mandatory period of intervention ends; schools may continue until end of academic year	
Jun 2027 – Jul 2027	Post-test student data collection	Steph Ainsworth
Jun/Jul 2027	Post-test headteacher and teacher surveys	Steph Ainsworth/Kate Wicker
Jun/Jul 2027	Interviews with delivery team	Helen Lawson
Jul 2027	IPE data collection completed	Helen Lawson
Jul 2027	Impact data collection completed	Steph Ainsworth
Jul 2027 – Jan 2028	Data analysis and report writing	Stephen Morris/Helen Lawson
Jan 2028	Draft report	Stephen Morris/Helen Lawson
Jun 2028	Final report	Stephen Morris/Helen Lawson
Apr 2029	First draft second report	Stephen Morris/Helen Lawson

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Appendix A: Changes since the previous EEF evaluation

Appendix Table 1: Changes since the previous evaluation

Feature		Efficacy to effectiveness stage
Intervention	Intervention content	The programme content has not changed. Resources to support implementation that have changed since the previous efficacy trial are: 1. Texts selected are at a cost of £50 and optional but were previously given at no charge. 2. A pupil card and a teacher card for each text have been provided reviewing the book and providing schools with useful information about each text. 3. Observations will be conducted by a nominated peer observation but were previously conducted by peers and NTU research assistants. 4. Additional short texts are to be provided to support with forming a temporary pair. 5. New shorter videos to support delivery have been developed for teachers and pupils.
	Delivery model	The delivery model will not change from the efficacy study. It is delivery team led, in-person for one day followed by online top-up training sessions.
	Intervention duration	The duration of the intervention is unchanged from the efficacy study at 20 weeks.
Evaluation	Eligibility criteria	The eligibility criteria remain the same as those at the efficacy stage. All pupils entering Year 5 from 1 st September 2026 in participating schools will be eligible. Eligible schools are state-funded primary schools located anywhere in England.
	Level of randomisation	The level of randomisation is the school and remains unchanged
	Outcomes and baseline	The feelings about reading questionnaire, containing the reading self-efficacy and motivation to read subscales, included as secondary outcomes in the efficacy study, are no longer included at the effectiveness stage. They are replaced by an engagement measure. The multi-dimensional fluency scale measure has been dropped as a secondary outcome at the effectiveness stage. All other outcome measures and baselines remain unchanged.
	Control condition	The control condition remains business as usual teaching of reading.