

# NEWHAM READING GUARANTEE

Programme evaluation 2012-2013

Key findings summary report

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## Foreword

Being able to read is vital for young people to achieve their educational and wider potential. As part of my Mayor's promises to residents, I introduced the Newham Reading Guarantee in autumn 2011 to help primary school children from five to seven years old to improve their reading. The programme forms part of our Newham Every Child programme, which complements traditional learning to ensure our young people have a good mix of academic and social education.

The programme provides a wealth of aspirational opportunities to inspire young people to achieve their potential. Building on the success Newham schools have already achieved and supporting their curricula, all the elements of our programme cultivate increased confidence, social skills, and a broader view of the world and society as a whole.

Newham was the first local authority in the country to fund free school meals for all primary school age children. All children in Year 5 get the opportunity to receive a free musical instrument and three years free tuition through Newham's Every Child a Musician programme, now the largest mass participation music programme in the country. Newham's Every Child a Theatre Goer provides a programme of world-class theatre experiences linked to the curriculum. Newham's Every Child a Sports Person provides Year 7 pupils with access to over 20 sports as part of their school PE curriculum.

The Newham Reading Guarantee supports schools to make better use of phonics and we worked closely with all our schools to agree this approach. The programme comprises three elements:

- the teaching of reading in schools using a structured phonics programme
- reading volunteers to help children to develop their skill in and enjoyment of reading
- one to one tuition to help those children who are behind their peers to catch-up.

As part of my commitment to the highest standards of evidence-based policy-making, Newham has worked with Staffordshire University to evaluate the early impact of the one to one support element of the scheme. This is the biggest programme of its kind in the country and the first time such a large scale evaluation of this approach has been carried out in Britain. It is also the first time different approaches to this – 'catch-up' and 'keep-up' – have been compared against each other.

The evaluation findings demonstrate the success of the one to one element of the Newham Reading Guarantee; and show that the programme has nearly doubled the improvement effect for underachievers in Year 1. The research evidences that the catch-up or keep-up approaches are equally valid and finds no systematic difference in the performance of children participating in the different schemes that schools use to deliver the programme.

The second year of this evaluation will explore the sustainability of the programme and will help us to understand how to give extra help to those children who need to catch-up with their peers.

I am committed to improving opportunities for local children and I would like to thank the pupils, teachers, teaching assistants and volunteers who continue to ensure the success of the Newham Reading Guarantee.



Sir Robin Wales  
Mayor of Newham

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## 1. Introduction

In autumn 2011, the London Borough of Newham began the Newham Reading Guarantee programme to help primary school pupils from five to seven years old to improve their reading. This programme is the biggest of its type in the country. The programme focuses on three elements:

1. the phonics programme across Newham's primary schools
2. reading volunteers for every school to help pupils read and progress
3. one-to-one support for pupils who fall behind their peers.

This programme is significant because it represents a major, universal intervention to improve reading. While phonics has been evaluated in previous research projects, the funding of one-to-one provision for pupils falling behind in their reading has not been delivered on this scale or evaluated across the range of available schemes.

Newham Council wanted to understand the unique contribution made by the one-to-one support element of their scheme to improved reading for underachieving pupils in its primary schools so the evaluation focuses on this strand of the programme.

Schools in Newham have a choice of nine main initiatives to deliver the one-to-one programme. The initiatives offer either a catch-up or keep-up approach. The keep-up approach provides ongoing support during the year for pupils who are struggling, while the catch-up approach options are for fixed time periods depending on the option selected by the school (further details are at Table 1). This evaluation is unique because in addition to being the largest evaluation of its type on the UK, it is also the first time that evaluation of the 'keep-up' and 'catch-up' methods have been carried out in a joint panel evaluation. As such the results will be of interest to commissioners and practitioners across the country.

Staffordshire University is delivering a two-year independent evaluation of the impact of the one-to-one support programme element of the Newham Reading Guarantee, on behalf of Newham Council. This summary presents the main findings from the first year of that evaluation. This mid-programme report addresses three questions:

1. Does the one-to-one programme work?
2. How is the programme working?
3. Does the improvement in reading ability of Newham's underachieving pupils vary systematically by type of pupil or by school?

## 2. Headline results

- Year 1 pupils on the one-to-one programme nearly doubled the expected progress of similar pupils who had not yet completed one-to-one support. This means that 75 per cent of those who were behind in their reading have now caught up to the level of reading expected for their age.
- In Year 2 the programme was effective for pupils with the most underachievement at the beginning of the year (defined as special educational need pupils with low reading ability). These pupils improved their reading levels by a third as a result of one-to-one support.
- Taken together, the findings for Year 1 and Year 2 suggest one-to-one support is most effective when targeted at an early stage of young people demonstrating problems with reading, or where the biggest problems persist.
- As a whole, in both Year 1 and Year 2 results there is no significant difference in the rate of pupil improvement by the delivery scheme or funding level per pupil.
- Encouragingly, as a whole there are no systematic differences in the improvement rate of pupils with respect to English as an additional language, free schools meals eligibility, gender or ethnicity. However, some differences exist within year group.

### 3. Methodology

Fifty-four schools participated in the one-to-one element of the Newham Reading Guarantee and in the evaluation. Just over half of pupils received the keep-up option which was Read Write Inc. Details of the one-to-one support options are in Table 1. In total the evaluation had data for 966 pupils across the 54 participating schools.

**Table 1. One-to-one support options**

Scheme name	Keep-up or catch-up focus
Read Write Inc	Keep-up
Better Reading Partnerships	Catch-up
Every Child a Reader (ECAR) *	Catch-up
Fisher Family Trust Wave 3	Catch-up
High Level Teaching Assistants	Catch-up
Letters and Sounds	Catch-up
Newham Wave 3	Catch-up
Reading Recovery *	Catch-up
Talking Partners	Catch-up
Other programmes	Catch-up
* Now the same scheme	

The evaluation used panel regression to implement the “difference-in-difference” estimator of programme effects. This statistical technique is well suited to analysis even of relatively small samples (pupil numbers in the low hundreds) and is often used in evaluations of this kind. It enabled us to control for influences on test scores other than participation in the one to one tuition programme - such as eligibility for free school meals (FSM), whether pupils had English as a first language (EAL), date of birth, gender, and whether pupils had special educational needs (SEN).

Differences were compared between the improvement of participants and non-participants before and after the reading support of the participating pupils. This enabled us to isolate and identify the effects of the one to one tuition programmes. Data was collected from schools at baseline in October 2012, December 2012, March 2013 and July 2013.

## 4. Does the programme work?

The implementation of the programme provided a natural treatment and comparison group. Because schools used different initiatives to implement the programme, and timed the implementation according to local priorities, by the March 2013 data collection some schools had completed tuition under the programme and others had not.

The programme effect on participating pupils was identified by comparing the improvement of pupils who had completed their one-to-one tuition by March 2013 ("completers") with the improvement of those pupils selected for participation who had either yet to begin or who were only partially complete ("non-completers").

Nationally, average progress is around three sub-levels (1 whole level) every year. At the end of Year 2 pupils are expected to achieve Level 2B (Table 2).

**Table 2. National curriculum levels and sub-levels**

National Curriculum Level	NC sub-level	School year group
Working towards	W	End of reception
Level 1	1c	
Level 1	1b	End of Year 1 average
Level 1	1a	
Level 2	2c	
Level 2	2b	Expected end of Year 2
Level 2	2a	
Level 3	3c	

Across Year 1 and Year 2 the sample used to test for the effect of one-to-one tuition included 344 pupils from 18 schools. The improvement in reading as a result of ageing and of education - other than one-to-one tuition - was a mean improvement of 1.15 National Curriculum (NC) sub-levels. The additional mean improvement as a result of the one-to-one tuition was 0.54 NC sub-levels.

The results were strongest for Year 1 pupils – who demonstrate nearly double this improvement as a result of participation in the one-to-one programme. For Year 1 (144 pupils from 13 schools, of which eight had "completers") the effect of ageing and education other than one-to-one tuition was a mean improvement of 0.95 NC sub-levels. The treatment effect of having completed one-to-one tuition was an additional mean improvement of 0.86 NC sub-levels. This suggests that one-to-one tuition is responsible for nearly half the improvement in reading performance and is highly effective in rectifying early problems in young people's reading.

In Year 1, both the ageing/educational and the programme effects are highly statistically significant showing that mainstream school provision in Newham is improving pupils' reading. The improvement effect of completed one-to-one tuition is also substantial over six months from a mean NC level of a little over "W" (Working Towards) to within the range of sub-level 1b.

The Year 1 effect is statistically significant and educationally substantial. Three-quarters of pupils (75 per cent) in Year 1 who were below their peers for reading and who completed their one-to-one programme caught-up with the average reading level for their peers.

Ofsted and DfE suggest children making satisfactory progress should achieve Level 2C by the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2) with more able children achieving Level 3. Average progress is around three sub-levels every two years so if a pupil makes one or two sub-levels of progress in one year they are in the expected range.

This suggests excellent progress for pupils in Year 1 who were underperforming but we will need to track them into Year 2 to fully understand the sustainability of results from the programme.

There is no additional effect of having completed one-to-one tuition across the whole Year 2 because the spread of performance is broader compared with Year 1. In addition to the spread of baseline performance, the difference between Year 1 and 2 may also be related to the gap between baseline and March. For example, at the end of Year 1 teachers identify reading levels. If pupils are identified as under achieving at the end of term they will receive one-to-one in September. However, Year 2 reading assessments are updated by teachers as late as the beginning of the October so some pupils may have already received four weeks of support. This might affect the programme results in Year 2 as these pupils will have already improved outside of the assessment period. We could not investigate this hypothesis as the sample of pupils starting after October was too small.

The evaluation also tested results for sub-groups in Year 2. For the sub-group of 120 Year 2 pupils with SEN status and who had initial levels of reading (NC levels of W or 1C) there is a substantial and statistically significant improvement in reading as a result of the programme. Although the effect is smaller than in Year 1, a third of the improvement made by the most severely underachieving pupils is the result of the programme. This suggests that the programme is effective for pupils with the most pronounced underachievement at the beginning of Year 2.

## 5. How is the programme working?

The programme is delivered through nine main approaches with Newham schools free to choose the option they feel is best for the pupil. More than half of pupils in the evaluation (56 per cent) participated in the Read Write Inc scheme or the “keep-up” approach (Table 1). Schemes are delivered by teachers and teaching assistants, however, most schemes are delivered by teaching assistants.

There is no evidence to suggest systematic differences in the performance of pupils participating in different initiatives. At the end of the school year, there is no discernable difference in the outcomes of initiatives informed by either a “catch-up” or a “keep-up” approach. This supports school choice among initiatives rather than a universal approach to implement the programme.

The improvement effects of the modes of delivery were estimated. No statistically significant differences in reading improvement between programme delivery by teachers and delivery by teaching assistants were identified. Again, this supports school choice for different delivery approaches rather than a universal approach to implement the programme.

### 5.1 The improvement in reading ability of Newham’s underachieving pupils does not vary systematically by type of pupil

No systematic differences are evident in the data to suggest any improvement differences in NC levels by EAL, FSM eligibility, gender and ethnicity. Findings from analysing improvement in phonics phases are consistent with findings from analysing NC sub-levels. Phonics phases are collected by schools in Year 1 in screening tests to confirm whether individual pupils have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard. They help to identify the pupils who need extra help to improve their reading skills. Ability at the end of Reception and subsequent improvement by end of Year 2 are positively related. This effect is made even more important by a threshold effect at the lowest NC levels. Hence, underachievers in Newham’s schools should be benchmarked against improvement rates for similar underachievers elsewhere.

## 5.2 The improvement effects of different approaches on pupils with different characteristics

To explore whether different approaches were more or less effective for different types of pupil the 'keep-up' Read Write Inc scheme which had the highest participation was compared to the results of the other eight initiatives which all operated 'catch-up'. This is the first time a panel evaluation of these two types of approaches has been carried out in the UK. Not all of the eight 'catch-up' initiatives had large enough sample sizes to be individually analysed. Therefore in this summary we report their findings as a group unless otherwise stated.

The evaluation examined 12 pupil characteristics for the whole sample and individually for Years 1 and 2 and found five statistically significant effects. Of these, two are for SEN (P) and one is for SEN (A). Each of these estimates is negative, which suggests the Ruth Miskin 'keep-up' schemes – compared to the 'catch-up' schemes – may be less effective in helping SEN pupils. Conversely, the significant positive effect on pupils in Year 1 with EAL may suggest the Read Write Inc 'keep-up' approach is particularly helpful for these pupils.

Results were also compared for phonics phases in addition to the NC scores to test findings. For phonics phases, the evaluation found no evidence of systematic differences in improvement between participants in the Ruth Miskin 'keep-up' scheme and participants in all other 'catch-up' schemes. This evidence from phonics phases is consistent with the evidence from NC sub-levels.

In Year 2, both Better Reading Partnerships and the Reading Recovery initiatives (both 'catch-up') underperform the other schemes but this is not found in Year 1.

Overall, taking the evidence on NC sub-levels together with the evidence on phonics phases, we do not find evidence strong enough to suggest systematic differences in the performance of pupils participating in different initiatives.

## 5.3 The improvement in reading ability of Newham's underachieving pupils does not vary systematically by school

A potential difference between schools concerns their programme funding. However, differences in total school funding or per pupil funding arising from the one-to-one programme are not sources of systematic improvement differences.

## 6. Next steps

The next step is to review what this means for the local authority and schools delivery in Year 2 of the one-to-one strand of the Newham Reading Guarantee.

**In the second year of the programme evaluation we will:**

- track the sustainability of progress by following Year 1 pupils who completed the programme into Year 2 using KS1 results
- explore the use of a control group using historical data to measure programme success over two years
- investigate underperformance at the extreme lower end of the ability range using data matching.





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