

NEWHAM READING GUARANTEE

Programme evaluation 2013-2014

Key findings summary report of Year 2

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Foreword

The ability to read is vital for young people to achieve their potential, both academically and in life. As part of my Mayor's promises to residents, I introduced the Newham Reading Guarantee in autumn 2011 to help primary school children aged from five to seven 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 opportunities to inspire young people and raise aspirations. 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 one to one support, namely 'catch-up' and 'keep-up' methods, have been compared against each other.

The evaluation findings demonstrate the success of the one to one element of the Newham Reading Guarantee and shows that by the end of KS1 85% of Year 1 children have caught up with their peers. Without the programme nearly three times as many children would have remained behind their classmates.

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 aged from five to seven to improve their reading. This programme is the biggest of its kind in the country. It 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, nor have evaluations previously explored a range of available schemes.

Newham Council wanted to understand how the one-to-one support element of its scheme contributed to improved reading among underachieving pupils in its primary schools. This is why the evaluation focuses on this unique strand of the programme. The intervention was delivered in the first year of school and we tracked its impact into year two.

Schools in Newham have a choice of nine different delivery methods of the one-to-one programme. These methods involve 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. The first year evaluation report identified no systematic differences between the 'keep-up' and 'catch-up' methods. As such the results will be of interest to commissioners and practitioners across the country.

Staffordshire University has delivered 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 second year of this evaluation.

This report addresses three questions:

1. What is the sustainability of programme for year 1 pupils at the end of KS1?
2. What is the catch-up effect of the programme on under achieving pupils at the end of Year 2 and the contribution of the programme to pupil performance?
3. What is the impact of absence on underachievers controlling for other variables?

2. Headline results

- Participation in one-to-one support accounts for a substantial and persistent increase in reading performance (measured by national curriculum scores – outlined in Table 1).
- Learning from Year 1 is sustained into Year 2. In the first year of the evaluation the estimated effect of the programme on Year 1 participants was an improvement of 0.86 national curriculum (NC) sub-levels. By the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) the treatment effect was 0.92 national curriculum (NC) sub-levels. This means that without the Programme children who achieved level 2C would otherwise have only reached level 1A.
- By the end of KS1 85% of Year 1 children who were behind caught up with their peers. Without the Programme, nearly three times more children would have remained behind their peers.
- Absence from school has a greater impact on those children who are falling behind on literacy than on other pupils. However, the effect of the child's own absence on attainment is less important than the effect of complex family influences. Living in a household with another child who is persistently absent has an average adverse effect of 20% on the expected educational progress of all Year 1 pupils who participated in the Programme. For the child who had not caught up with their peers at the end of Year 1 this effect is a reduction of 0.32 NC sub levels or nearly 40% of their expected educational progress.

3. Methodology

Fifty-four schools participated in the one-to-one element of the Newham Reading Guarantee and in the evaluation. In total the evaluation contained data for 966 pupils across the 54 participating schools. Of these children 455 were in Year 1 at the start of the Programme in September 2012. Just over half of pupils received the keep-up option Read Write Inc. These 455 pupils were tracked into the second year of the evaluation.

Descriptive statistics measured the current progress towards catch-up of pupils who received one-to-one support in Year 1 in 2012/13 and are now at the end of KS1 (Figure 1).

To measure the catch-up effect of the Programme a treatment group was created using the Year 2 before and after results (2012 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP); and 2014 KS1 data) for participating pupils during Year 1. The comparison group was created from similar children in the current Year 5 using 2009 EYFSP/ Reception and 2011 KS1 scores. Using Year 5 children ensures there is no effect as a result of one-to-one reading support as the Programme was not in operation when these children were in their first years of primary school. The correlation between the before (EYFSP scores) and after (KS1) measures is 0.58. The higher the correlation between the pre-treatment and post-treatment outcome variables, the more bias reduction is achieved.

Children in both groups were then matched using propensity score matching (a common technique in evaluations of this kind). Balance checking on the model was used to check for validity. The matching estimator is used to restrict the sample for subsequent difference-in-difference estimation of programme effects. Difference-in-difference (DiD) weighted analysis was then performed to compare the differences between EYFSP and KS1 scores between the treatment group (programme participants) and the comparison group (matched non-participants).

To examine the effect of absence, unauthorised and authorised absence data was matched to the Year 1 data set and the difference in difference model was re-run. This part of the evaluation also included data on unauthorised and authorised absences of other children in the family.

4. Does the programme work?

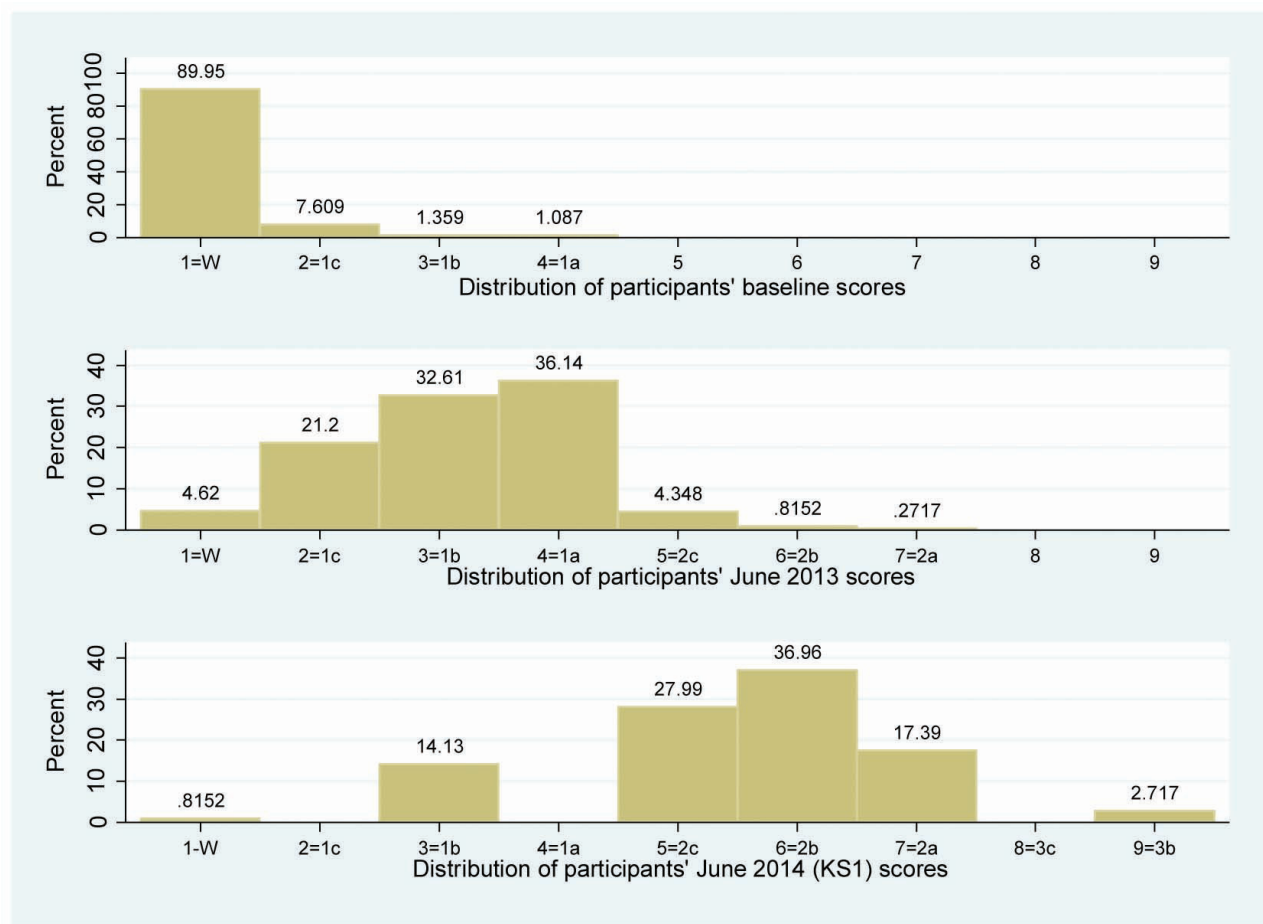
At baseline most pupils in the evaluation (90%) were at working towards (W) and a further 8% were at level 1C (see Table 1). At the end of Year 1, the evaluation found that 75% of the programme participants had caught up with their peers achieving at least Level 1B (Figure 1). The evaluation tracked these participants to the end of KS1 to explore sustainability of the Programme.

Table 1. National curriculum levels and sub-levels

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

Figure 1 - Participating pupil performance over time

Distribution of Reading Guarantee participants' NC Reading Scores: baseline (September 2012); June 2013; and June 2014 (KS1) (per cent)



The Department for Education (DfE) guidelines state that most 7-year-olds are expected to achieve Level 2¹. At baseline, children selected for participation in the Reading Guarantee programme were a homogeneous group with respect to their underachievement in reading. By KS1, 85% of children selected for participation in the one to one programme had caught up to the DfE guideline level. This equates to 387 children.

From baseline to March 2013 the estimated effect for Year 1 participants was an additional mean improvement of 0.86 national curriculum (NC) sub-levels. By the end of KS1 the treatment effect is 0.92 national curriculum (NC) sub-levels. This suggests that without the Programme those children achieving 2C would have been at 1A. The estimated effect of the Programme on participants with the lowest scores at reception level is greatest at almost one national curriculum (NC) sub-level. The effects for participants with successively higher reception scores are successively smaller.

¹See http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/archive/ks3_05/k5.shtml (accessed 02-09-2014).

5. What is the catch-up effect of the programme on under achieving pupils at the end of Year 2 and the programme contribution to pupil performance?

The Programme delivers an educationally important effect that is sustained until at least KS1. Without the Programme, results suggest nearly three times as many children would have been unable to catch up – 43% compared to just 15%.

The Reading Guarantee programme only accounts for part of the participants' educational progress over this two year period. However, participation in the Programme accounts for a substantial and persistent increase in reading scores that nearly triples the rate of catch up for this group of underachievers.

6. What is the impact of absence on underachievers controlling for other variables?

This section addresses the 25% of Year 1 pupils who had not caught up with their peers by the end of Year 1. Absence from school has a greater impact on those children who are falling behind on literacy than on other pupils. The negative effect is significant at one-eighth of the total average improvement for authorised absences and one-seventh of the total average improvement for unauthorised absences.

Living in a household with another child who is persistently absent also has an adverse effect on the progress of all Year 1 pupils who participated in the Programme. In the whole Year 1 group, the highly significant result shows a reduction in the expected educational progress effect of 20%. This effect is nearly double for the child who had not caught up with their peers at the end of Year 1. For this group, the effect of living in a household with persistent absence is direct: a reduction of 0.32 NC sub levels in the attained improvement compared with the expected level. This reduction is almost 40% of the estimated expected educational progress effect for these children. The effect of school absence within the household aligns with wider socio-cultural influences that may give rise to both unauthorised absence and poor attainment.

Both SEN effects - SEN_A and SEN_P also have a large and statistically significant effect on the improvement of the group who do not catch-up. In contrast, neither have an effect on the improvement of the group who does.