Units of Sound

Key Conclusions

1. This attempt to evaluate the UofS programme was severely compromised and no firm conclusions can be drawn from it.
2. Schools need dedicated staff and better ICT support in their school if they are to implement UofS.
3. Students in schools that participated in the distance-learning-only support seemed to perform similarly to those who received face-to-face support.
4. More research with better recruitment, better technology support, and lower attrition would be needed to determine the effectiveness of the programme and the generalisability of the effects.

What is the impact?

This attempt to evaluate the UofS programme was severely compromised by high numbers of schools dropping out and students not completing testing. Consequently, no firm conclusions can be drawn from it.

From the collected data, neither outcome (reading or spelling ability) showed a significant impact of the intervention on students compared to control students’ achievement. Overall, there were negative effects that were not statistically significant, increasing the likelihood that they may have occurred by chance. The results for the children eligible for free school meals (FSM) were considerably more negative, but still not significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>NO. OF PUPILS</th>
<th>EFFECT SIZE (95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL)</th>
<th>ESTIMATED MONTHS' PROGRESS</th>
<th>EVIDENCE STRENGTH</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention vs control (all pupils)</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>-0.08 (-0.27, +0.11)</td>
<td>-1 month</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>£390,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention vs control (FSM)</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>-0.21 (-0.46, +0.05)</td>
<td>-3 month</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>£390,206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How secure is the finding?

The evaluation was set up as an efficacy trial, meaning that it seeks to test evaluations in the best possible conditions to see if they hold promise. They do not indicate the extent to which the intervention will be effective in all schools.

Overall, the findings from this evaluation are judged to be of weak security with one padlock. The very high attrition rate of 46% was mostly at the school level, but because the study used within-school randomisation there was no evidence that the attrition biased the findings. However, the high attrition, technology challenges, and other issues stated above, make it impossible to generalise the findings to other schools.

In this randomised controlled trial, the online New Group Reading Test (NGRT) was administered to the participating students before the intervention began in each phase and post-tested following implementation of the intervention in each phase, along with the online Single Word Spelling Test (SWST).

The surveys indicated that the teachers, students and teaching assistants who experienced the programme had mostly positive perceptions of the programme and believed that it had improved learning. However, surveys and
interviews with the DA coaches suggested that a lack of technology support and engagement with the online training may have decreased implementation fidelity.

To view the project's evaluation protocol click here.

How much does it cost?

Owing to variation in the number of students per school and the lack of data about how many teachers and how many teaching assistants participated in the study, it is impossible to determine the exact cost or cost-effectiveness of the intervention as implemented in this study. If a school were purchasing the UoS programme, DA estimates that it would cost about £2,500 per school for the resources and training. If there were ten students in a school, that would be £250 per student.