Family Skills

Family Skills aims to improve the literacy and language skills of children learning English as an additional language (EAL). It focuses on supporting parents of Reception-aged children (aged 4-5) and consists of 11 weekly sessions for parents delivered at the child’s school by external family learning tutors. Sessions focus on topics including reading to children, phonics, and making the most of bilingualism.

EEF Summary

The EEF, The Bell Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy funded Family Skills to build knowledge about two important types of education intervention, family learning programmes and programmes specifically designed to support children with EAL. Family learning programmes are widely delivered, but there have been few high quality evaluations to date that assess whether this type of approach can improve pupil outcomes. Similarly, there is limited evidence on the best ways of supporting children with EAL.

This trial found that overall children of parents who were offered the Family Skills intervention did not make any more progress in literacy than children of parents who were not offered it. This finding has high security.

Around two thirds of eligible parents did not attend Family Skills sessions. Exploratory analysis suggests that the children of parents who did attend at least one session made around one additional month’s progress in literacy compared with children in control schools. The evaluators stress that this exploratory result should be treated with caution.

Schools need to allow plenty of time to recruit parents before the programme starts, which was a challenge in this project due to the constrained timeframe of the trial. The vast majority of schools receiving Family Skills said that they would recommend it to other schools, highlighting that it provided a good opportunity to build home-school links and engage parents in their children’s learning.
Research Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/Group</th>
<th>Impact - the size of the difference between Family Skills pupils and other pupils</th>
<th>Security - how confident are we in this result?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>0 Months’ Progress</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy (Pupil Premium)</td>
<td>0 Months’ Progress</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

There were 115 schools in the trial located in 11 local authorities around the country.

19% of the pupils in the trial schools were eligible for FSM.

57% of the pupils in the trial schools were categorised as EAL.

Could I implement this in my school?

Teaching staff are expected to support the Family Skills delivery. This typically includes around 3 hours of input from a Reception class teacher, 7 hours from teaching assistants, and 5 hours from a family or EAL liaison officer, most of which falls in the term when the project is delivered.

Delivered by External Tutors  
Participant group Parents  
Intervention length 1 Term

How much will it cost?

Delivering Family Skills costs £3,154 per school, on average, or £143 per eligible pupil per year.

Cost per pupil £143  
No. of Teachers/TAs Variable  
Training time per staff member 0.0 Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Key Stage</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>End date</th>
<th>Type of trial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>1,985</td>
<td>Early Years</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>Efficacy Trial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation Conclusions

1. EAL children in Family Skills schools did not make additional progress in literacy compared to EAL children in
control schools when assessed at the end of Reception. This result assesses the opportunity for parents to attend Family Skills, rather than the impact for those who attended. This finding has high security.

2. Exploratory analysis suggests that EAL children whose parents did attend at least one Family Skills session made around one month’s additional progress in literacy compared to EAL children in control schools at the end of Reception. However, the evaluator believes that this exploratory finding should be treated with caution.

3. The vast majority of schools receiving Family Skills said that they would recommend it to other schools, highlighting that it provided a good opportunity to build home-school links and engage parents in their children’s learning.

4. On average, eight families attended per school, which represents around one third of those who had the opportunity. The level of take-up was lower than expected and may have been due to the limited time available for parent recruitment in this trial.

5. To ensure higher levels of attendance, schools would benefit from more time to engage parents before the programme begins; tutors recommended five weeks for engagement. Face-to-face activities, with ongoing reminders, were reported to be most effective for recruiting and retaining parents to the programme.