Story Choices Project: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This information is for settings wishing to take part in the EEF funded project, Story Choices. Please read this information carefully.

**Aims of the Project**

All Early Years settings know about the value of storybooks to their day-to-day practice, and most already use some of the principles of **interactive book reading**. This project will investigate how much **planning** these storybook activities makes a difference to outcomes.

**Who is leading the project?**

A team from Coventry University are carrying out this research, led by Professor Julia Carroll. The team work within the Centre for Global Learning, an education research centre. The project is funded by the Education Endowment Foundation.

You can contact the Coventry team using the dedicated email address: [StoryChoices@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:StoryChoices@coventry.ac.uk) or the phone number 07974984042.

All researchers who visit your setting will be fully trained and will have full Disclosure and Barring Service certificates.

**What will be involved in the project?**

We want to compare **two different approaches** to planning interactive storybook reading:

a) **Responsive or Child-led Approach:** Educators ask children to select the book for the daily group reading session or actively involve them in the book selection process. While reading, the questions and discussion points occur spontaneously.

b) **Planned Storybook and Discussion Points Approach:** Educators not only select the storybook ahead of time, but they also plan the specific discussion points they will use while engaging children in conversations about the story.

We will randomly allocate settings to deliver one of the approaches and ask you to stick to that approach for your main storybook sessions for fifteen weeks. Other aspects of your storybook reading routine can remain the same (for example, whether you read in key worker groups or with the whole class).

**What settings are eligible to take part?**

We are looking for childcare settings based in the West Midlands, East Midlands or Greater Manchester area. We welcome all types of nurseries and preschools from the maintained or private, voluntary and independent sector. Settings must have a minimum of eight 3-4 year old children attending for at least fifteen hours a week.

**What does random allocation mean?**

The evaluation will take the form of a ‘randomised controlled trial’ (RCT). This means that half the settings will be randomly allocated to one approach and half will be allocated to the other approach. The allocation to approach will be decided by someone who hasn’t visited the settings, to make sure it is fair. When the trial is completed, outcomes from the children in the settings in one approach will be compared to outcomes from the children in the other approach, to find out whether there is a measurable difference between them. The random allocation is essential to the trial, as it allows us to take account of the many other variations between different settings. It is important that you understand that consenting to take part in the trial means that you will not be able to choose which approach you take part in.

**How does my setting benefit from taking part?**

* You will be taking part in research with immediate, practical relevance for others in your position. This will help us understand how storybook reading practices in preschool influence children’s progress.
* At the end of the project, your setting will receive an Amazon voucher of £200 as a thank you for your support. We will also give you access to LanguageScreen, an app to assess children’s language in your setting (normally costing £245).
* We won’t be comparing a ‘control’ and ‘intervention’ – we will be comparing two approaches which we think will both have positive effects for the children. We believe all children will benefit in this project.
* You will not be required to attend training or have to take time away from your day-to-day teaching.
* This project can work flexibly with a variety of weekly routines in different contexts. As long as you have regular group storybook reading sessions, you can do this project.
* You will be asked to make relatively small changes to your everyday practice, keeping the other elements of your work the same.
* This project will give you a chance to reflect on the best ways to implement storybook reading. We will ask about other aspects of your storybook reading routine, but we don’t want you to change them.

**What will we be asked to do, and when?**

The table below shows the key activities of the project and how much time they should take

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Activity | Time required |
| October 2024 | Settings will send an information sheet to parents | None |
| October | Individual educators complete an online survey about their background and knowledge of how to support language | 20 minutes |
| November 2024 | Settings provide background information about individual children in their setting using an online form | 1 hour |
| November 2024 | Assessment of vocabulary of individual children, administered by a researcher | We will visit the setting for one or two days, working individually with children for 15 minutes each |
| December 2024 | We will inform settings which approach they should follow and provide guidance on the approach | None |
| January 2025-April 2025 | Settings carry out the storybook reading approach 3 times a week for 15 weeks. Monitoring sheet to be completed after each session | Approx. 20 minutes storybook reading and 5 minutes completing the form per session |
| May 2025 | Individual vocabulary, language and attitudes to books testing, administered by a researcher | We will visit the setting for two or three days, working individually with children for two sessions of 15 minutes each |
| June 2025 | Individual educators complete an online survey about their views of the approach | 15 minutes |
| June 2025 | We will ask eight settings to act as ‘case study settings’ and provide more detailed information on how the approaches were implemented in their classes. This would involve researchers visiting the setting, observing some storybook reading sessions, and interviewing the staff members about their experiences. | 3 hours |

## Roles and responsibilities

**The Research Team (Coventry University) will:**

* Be the first point of contact for any questions about the Story Choices intervention.
* Provide information sheets and opt out letters for parents
* Collate background information about the pupils taking part in the project (name, date of birth, whether they have English as an additional language (EAL), eligibility for early years pupil premium, any special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), normal hours of attendance) and store it securely
* Administer the pre-testing and the post-testing, including direct assessments with children and surveys with staff
* Ensure all research staff working with children are appropriately trained and have Disclosure and Barring Service certificates.
* Ensure that settings are independently and randomly allocated to approach in December 2024
* Provide guidance to settings to allow them to complete the Story Choices trial
* Provide support to educators delivering the Story Choices trial via e-mail and telephone
* Conduct observations of some of the Story Choices sessions to understand delivery.
* Communicate with the schools about all aspects of Story Choices delivery and assessment.
* Support publication and dissemination of evaluation findings at the end of the study.
* Provide settings with a thank you Amazon voucher of £200 per participating setting.

**Settings taking part in the project will:**

* Read the Setting Information Sheet and Privacy Notice before signing the MOU.
* Name a Key Contact for the project who has sufficient capacity to liaise with Coventry University about the project. The setting will inform Coventry University if this needs to change, for example if they leave the setting.
* Be a point of contact for parents/carers, including providing them with information about the project and informing Coventry University about any pupil withdrawal requests from parents. Coventry University will provide information sheets and withdrawal forms for settings to distribute to parents.
* Agree to randomized allocation to one of the two approaches
* Provide researchers with background demographic data on the children (name, date of birth, whether they have EAL, eligibility for early years pupil premium, any SEND, normal hours of attendance).
* Facilitate researchers to work with the children to assess their vocabulary level and interest in books before and after the intervention.
* Agree that each participating educator will:
  + Follow the guidelines for storybook reading according to the approach you have been allocated to, at least three times a week for fifteen weeks.
  + Plan and keep records of sessions according to the guidance.
  + Participate in short online surveys in November 2024 and May 2025
  + Interviews – a selection of educators will be invited for semi-structured in-depth telephone interviews to discuss their experience of the evaluation. Participation will be voluntary.
* If a setting would like to withdraw from the trial, they should inform Coventry University immediately

## Use of data

All data, including children’s test responses and any other pupil data, will be treated with total confidentiality. Data will be collected and analysed by the Research Team. For the purpose of research, the data will be shared, with Education Endowment Foundation and potentially other research teams and the UK Data Archive. More detail on this process is provided in the Privacy Notice.No individual setting, parent or child will be identified in any report arising from the research. The study has received full ethical approval from Coventry University. Please see the Privacy Notice for Staff, the Privacy Notice for parents and the EEF’s privacy statement for further detail on how personal data will be collected and used (these documents are available [here](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/privacy-notices/guidance-on-data-protection-for-schools-and-settings-involved-in-an-eef-funded-project).

**Head of Setting agreement**

I agree for my setting \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to take part in the **Story Choices Trial** and I accept the terms and approaches outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding and Privacy Notice.

Setting Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Head of Setting Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Head of Setting Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Key Contact Agreement (if different from above)**

Key Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Key Contact Job Role: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address:  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project.**

**Please return this form to:** [storychoices@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:storychoices@coventry.ac.uk), or to Story Choices, Research Centre for Global Learning, Coventry University, Priory Street, CV1 5FB.