

Switch-on

Review: November 2019

Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to EIF's terms of reference, and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the programme provider.

Switch-on is a schools-based literacy programme. It is a targeted-indicated programme for children between the ages of 6 and 14 working below age expectations in reading and writing. It is delivered in daily one-to-one sessions lasting 20 minutes over the course of 10 weeks and aims to improve both reading and writing skills.

The target population of the programme can include those who are SEN or for whom English is not their first language. The programme is currently run in both primary schools at secondary schools up to the end of Key Stage 3, additionally the programme is also run in Special Educational Schools.

The programme is grounded in the belief that improving literacy skills at a young age is a powerful tool in challenging and overcoming poverty and inequality. The intervention aims to teach students to become active, independent readers and writers who can participate fully in all classroom and subject activities. This is done through 50 daily one to one sessions over the course of 10 weeks each lasting 20 minutes and delivered by trained TAs, librarians and teachers. Each reading session sees a pupil read two familiar books independently before reading a book from the previous session and receiving feedback. The pupil is then introduced to a new book and receives support as they read it. The writing session includes reading a familiar book before moving on to a series of tasks around writing down an orally delivered message and re-assembling it.

Evidence
rating: **3+ ***

Cost rating: **1**

EIF Programme Assessment

Switch-on has evidence of a **short-term positive impact** on child outcomes from at least one rigorous evaluation.

Evidence
rating: **3+ ***

What does the evidence rating mean?

Level 3 indicates **evidence of efficacy**. This means the programme can be described as evidence-based: it has evidence from at least one rigorously conducted RCT or QED demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome.

This programme does not receive a rating of 4 as it has not yet replicated its results in another rigorously conducted study, where at least one study indicates long-term impacts, and at least one uses measures independent of study participants.

What does the plus mean?

The plus rating indicates that this programme has evidence from at least one level 3 study, along with evidence from other studies rated 2 or better.

What does the asterisk mean?

The asterisk indicates that this programme's evidence base includes mixed findings: that is, studies suggesting positive impact alongside studies that on balance indicate no effect or negative impact.

More detail on mixed findings for this programme

- 3+ reflects the fact that at least one highly robust study conducted in the UK (Gorard et al., 2014) suggests a positive impact in accordance with other studies (Coles, 2012).
- Mixed findings reflect the fact that there are also robust studies with more equivocal findings. Particularly, we have reviewed one study (Patel et al., 2017) conducted in the UK which did not demonstrate that Switch-on was consistently more effective than standard services at improving the primary outcomes of the evaluation. For more detail on EIF's assessment of this study and its findings, please see 'About the evidence'.
- For more information on EIF's approach to mixed findings, see: [What happens when the evidence is mixed?](#)

Cost rating

A rating of 1 indicates that a programme has a low cost to set up and deliver, compared with other interventions reviewed by EIF. This is equivalent to an estimated unit cost of less than £100.

Cost rating: 1

Child outcomes

According to the best available evidence for this programme's impact, it can achieve the following positive outcomes for children:

Enhancing school achievement & employment

Improved reading ability

Based on study 1

2.2-point improvement on the GL New Group Reading Test B

Improvement index: **+9**

This means we would expect the average participant in the comparison group who did not receive the intervention (ie, someone for whom 50% of their peers have better outcomes and 50% have worse outcomes), to improve to the point where they would have better outcomes than 59% and worse outcomes than 41% of their peers, if they had received the intervention.

Immediately after the intervention

Based on study 2

Improved writing ability

Based on study 2

Key programme characteristics

Who is it for?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to the following age-groups:

- Preadolescents

How is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to implementation through these delivery models:

- Individual

Where is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation in these settings:

- Primary school
- Secondary school

The programme may also be delivered in these settings:

How is it targeted?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation as:

- Targeted indicated
-

Where has it been implemented?

United Kingdom

UK provision

This programme has been implemented in the UK.

UK evaluation

This programme's best evidence includes evaluation conducted in the UK.

Spotlight sets

EIF includes this programme in the following Spotlight sets:

- programmes for children with recognised or possible special education needs
-

About the programme

What happens during delivery?

How is it delivered?

- Switch-on is delivered in 50 sessions of 20 minutes' duration each by trained educational practitioners to individual pupils.

What happens during the intervention?

- The content of each session can differ depending on whether the reading or writing element of the intervention is being delivered:
 - The reading session sees a pupil read two familiar books independently before reading a book from the previous session and receiving feedback. The pupil is then introduced to a new book and receives support as they read it.
 - The writing session includes reading a familiar book before moving on to a series of tasks around writing down an orally delivered message and re-assembling it.

What are the implementation requirements?

Who can deliver it?

- The practitioner who delivers this programme is a Teaching Assistant, Librarian, or Teacher with NFQ-6 level qualifications.

What are the training requirements?

- Practitioners have 2 days of programme training. Booster training of practitioners is not required.

How are the practitioners supervised?

Practitioner supervision is provided through the following processes:

- It is recommended that practitioners are supervised by 1 programme developer supervisor (qualified to NFQ-7/8 level), with 7 hours of programme training.

What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

Programme fidelity is maintained through the following processes:

- Training manual
- Video or DVD training
- Fidelity monitoring

Is there a licensing requirement?

There is no licence required to run this programme.

How does it work? (Theory of Change)

How does it work?

- The programme delivers personalised teaching of specific reading strategies to support students to achieve their full literacy potential.
- The intervention aims to teach students to become active, independent readers who can participate fully in all classroom and subject activities.
- In the short-term students have better reading outcomes and are more motivated to engage and enjoy reading.
- In the long-term, students have better life-chances as they are more able to access the curriculum

Intended outcomes

Enhancing school achievement & employment

Contact details

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About the evidence

Switch-on's most rigorous evidence comes from an RCT that was conducted in UK (Gorard et al., 2014).

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child outcomes.

This programme has evidence from at least one rigorously conducted RCT along with evidence from an additional comparison group study. Consequently, the programme receives a 3+ rating overall.

However, this programme's evidence base includes mixed findings: that is, studies suggesting positive impact alongside studies that on balance indicate no effect or negative impact.

Study 1

Citation: Gorard, Huat See, & Siddiqui, 2014

Design: RCT

Country: United Kingdom

Sample: 314 children between 11 and 12 years old where children are reading at a below age average level.

Timing: Post-test

Child outcomes:

- Improved reading ability
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Other outcomes:

- None measured
-

Study rating: 3

Gorard, S., See, B. H., & Siddiqui, N. (2014). Switch-On Reading: Evaluation Report and Executive Summary. Education Endowment Foundation.

Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/switch-on-reading/>

Study design and sample

The first study is a rigorously conducted RCT.

This study involved random assignment of children to a Switch-on treatment group and a business as usual group.

This study was conducted in the UK, with a sample of 314 children aged between 11 and 12. The majority of the sample (63%) were classified as SEN. A further third (31%) of children in the sample were FSM eligible and 12% of the sample were Not White British.

Measures

Reading age was measured using the New Group Reading Test (achievement test)

Findings

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on one child outcome.

This includes:

- Reading ability

Study 2

Citation: Coles, 2012

Design: RCT

Country: United Kingdom

Sample: 100 children between 5 and 11 years old where children are reading and writing at a below age average level.

Timing: Post-test

Child outcomes:

- Improved reading ability
 - Improved writing ability
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Other outcomes:

- None measured
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Study rating: 2+

Coles, J (2012). An evaluation of the teaching assistant led Switch-on literacy intervention. MA Literacy Learning and Literacy Difficulties dissertation, UCL Institute of Education, University of London.

Study design and sample

The second study is an RCT.

This study involved random assignment of children to a Switch-on treatment group and a business as usual group.

61% of pupils were FSM eligible.

Measures

Reading age was measured using Schonell Graded Word Reading Test (achievement test).

Writing age was measured using Daniel and Diack Word Spelling Test (achievement test).

Findings

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child outcomes.

This includes:

- Increased reading ability
- Increased writing ability

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to high differential attrition, hence why a higher rating is not achieved.

Study 3

Citation: Patel et al., 2017

Design: RCT

Country: United Kingdom

Sample: 999 children across 183 schools between the ages of 7 and 8 years old, where children are reading and writing at a below age average level.

Timing: Post-test

Child outcomes:

Other outcomes:

- None measured
-

Study rating: NE

Patel, R. Jabin, N., Bussard, L., Cartagena, J., Haywood, S., & Lumpkin, M. (2017). Switch-On Effectiveness Trial: Evaluation Report and Executive Summary. Education Endowment Foundation.

Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/switch-on-effectiveness-trial>

Study design and sample

The third study is a rigorously conducted RCT.

This study involved random assignment of children to a Switch-on treatment group and a business as usual group.

This study was conducted in the UK, with a sample of 999 children between 8-9 years of age. 37% of the sample were pupils eligible for FSM.

Measures

Reading age was measured using Hodder Group Reading Test A (achievement test)

Findings

This study found no statistically significant improvements for programme participants on all measured child outcomes.

Guidebook

The EIF Guidebook provides information about early intervention programmes that have at least preliminary evidence of achieving positive outcomes for children. It provides information based on EIF's assessment of the strength of evidence for a programme's effectiveness, and on detail about programmes shared with us by those who design, run and deliver them.

The Guidebook serves an important starting point for commissioners to find out more about effective early interventions, and for programme providers to find out more about what good evidence of impact looks like and how it can be captured. As just one of our key resources for commissioners and practitioners, the Guidebook is an essential part of EIF's work to support the development of and investment in effective early intervention programmes.

Our assessment of the evidence for a programme's effectiveness can inform and support certain parts of a commissioning decision, but it is not a substitute for professional judgment. Evidence about what has worked in the past offers no guarantee that an approach will work in all circumstances. Crucially, the Guidebook is not a market comparison website: ratings and other information should not be interpreted as a specific recommendation, kite mark or endorsement for any programme.

[How to read the Guidebook](#)

[EIF evidence standards](#)

[About the EIF Guidebook](#)

EIF

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) is an independent charity and a member of the What Works network. We support the use of effective early intervention for children, young people and their families: identifying signals of risk, and responding with effective interventions to improve outcomes, reduce hardship and save the public money in the long term.

We work by generating evidence and knowledge of what works in our field, putting this information in the hands of commissioners, practitioners and policymakers, and supporting the adoption of the evidence in local areas and relevant sectors.

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