

Vocabulary for Reading: The Power of Words
An intervention to improve vocabulary and reading comprehension in Years 3 & 4

We are contacting you about a research project focused on improving vocabulary and reading comprehension outcomes for targeted Year 3 and 4 pupils due to take place during 2024-26 academic years. We are looking for schools interested to take part in this project. [The project has been funded by the Nuffield Foundation \[Grant reference number EDO /FR-000024043\].](#)

Vocabulary for Reading (VfR) is a structured intervention approach to teaching vocabulary (mostly Tier-2) aligned to classroom texts to improve reading, with a teaching cycle of Revise, Learn, Practise, Apply, and using a multi-strategy approach including collaborative activities.

[Evidence](#) from a recent study undertaken in primary schools indicates positive impact of approximately five months additional progress when using this intervention with pupils with poor vocabulary who also struggle with comprehension in lower Key Stage 2.

Schools who are eligible to participate must have at least four pupils suitable for the intervention in both Year 3 and 4 (8 pupils in total) and must be willing to deliver this to 8 eligible pupils taught by teaching assistants in small groups of four pupils for 20minutes at least three times per week over 16 weeks during 2024-25 or 2025-26 academic years, in addition to usual Literacy lesson time.

We are recruiting 50 primary schools in regions with an above national average level of FSM pupils. To facilitate face-to-face training for intervention schools we will be looking for clusters of approximately 10 schools to participate from a specific geographic region.

Every school must be prepared to be randomly allocated to act as a treatment (Group 1) or wait-control school (Group 2) during the study.

- Group 1 (Treatment group): These 25 schools will deliver the intervention to 8 eligible pupils, implemented by trained staff during academic year 2024-25.
- Group 2 (Wait-Control group): These 25 schools will continue with usual teaching during academic year 2024-25 and will be offered training to deliver the intervention in June-July 2025 for delivery in school from September 2025.

All 50 participating schools whether in Group 1 or Group 2 must also be willing to participate in the evaluation, including completing pupil reading tests during academic year 2024-25 (to be provided to the schools) and staff assessments.

At the end of the study, all participating schools will receive £400.

If you would like to participate, please read the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) carefully, complete pages 6 and 7, and return by email to vocab@gub.ac.uk

What does the intervention involve?

FFT's Vocabulary intervention programme, Vocabulary for Comprehension, is designed to extend children's word knowledge, support their confidence to read with understanding, and express themselves more effectively. It aims to extend their word use, giving them access to a richer and more precise vocabulary which they can use with increasing appropriateness.

The intervention programme is aimed at children who are reading accurately but whose understanding is limited because their word knowledge is sketchy. It sets out to extend their understanding of word meanings, provide them with useful vocabulary skills that they can apply independently, and build their confidence as word users and readers.

A staff team composed of one staff lead and two teaching assistants will receive full training and resources to implement the intervention in their school.

The training for teachers will focus on how to choose relevant words to explore – based on the class's reading - suggest a lesson structure and provide a set of engaging, practical activities which encourage children to explore the new words they have been taught. It will also look at how skills teaching and oral work can support children's growing word knowledge. The training involves:

- A Coordinator's briefing (1 ½ hours, on line)
- Training: How to select words for the project (½ day, on line)
- Training: The vocabulary lesson and practical activities (1 day, face to face training for 'treatment' schools, on-line for 'control' schools)
- Meeting: Discussion to support implementation in school (1 – 1 ½ hours, on line)

The training will be led by FFT staff Andy Taylor, Education Director (Literacy), who designed the programme, and Zoe Young, Adviser.

Schools taking part in this project agree to work with groups of Year 3 and Year 4 children – 4 from each year – providing three lessons a week. Schools will be given guidance to select 8 eligible pupils (four each from Year 3 & 4) who require additional vocabulary and reading comprehension targeted support. Lessons will typically take around 20 minutes. Schools are asked to run the programme for 16 weeks between November 2024 and May 2025. Children will be assessed in September, March and June. See the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for more details of the project.