

Mastering Number at Reception and KS1 (Reception focus) Trial 2025-26

Parents and carers' information letter and withdrawal form

Dear Parent / Carer,

We are writing to you because the school your child will be joining in September has chosen to take part in a research study - the **Mastering Number at Reception and KS1 (Reception focus) trial (2025-26)**.

This letter is being sent to parents and carers of children that will be in Reception from September 2025 (academic year 2025/26), in all schools that have signed up to participate. It provides more information about the trial and what it will involve for your child. The school is sending you this letter on behalf of the National Foundation for Educational Research, (NFER), the independent evaluators of this trial.

What is the Mastering Number programme?

The Mastering Number programme, developed by the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics (NCETM) and funded by the Department for Education (DfE), is an approach to teaching mathematics focusing on key knowledge and understanding needed in Reception and Key Stage 1. The programme aims to secure firm foundations in the development of good number sense for all children from Reception through to Year 1 and Year 2.

Lead teachers in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 in participating schools will receive national training delivered by NCETM and local training coordinated by Maths Hubs. Schools taking part in the Mastering Number programme will use the 31 weeks of teaching materials in Reception classes for four short sessions each week, aimed at developing children's fluency and flexibility with number.

About the trial

The trial aims to assess the impact of the Mastering Number programme on Reception pupils (with a focus on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds) and their teachers and will take place during the 2025-26 academic year. The results will inform future guidance for school leaders. Your child's participation will strengthen the evidence of the impact of the Mastering Number programme on pupils' attainment.

- The NCETM will run the training and provide teaching materials and resources to the schools.
- The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is funding the trial.
- NFER is the independent evaluator which means that we will collect and analyse the information, including administrative and assessment data, so that we can understand whether the programme is making a difference.

This research uses a randomised controlled trial (RCT) design. This means we will randomly select some schools to use the Mastering Number programme in the 2025-26 academic year while others continue their usual practice. By comparing these two groups of schools, we can see if the Mastering Number programme makes a difference to children's learning. This method is considered a fair and effective way to test new educational programmes.

Your child's school will be randomly allocated to one of the two following groups:

- 1) The Intervention group, which will use the Mastering Number programme; or
- 2) The Control group, which will continue with their usual practice.

Schools allocated to the control group will have the opportunity to use the Mastering Number programme in the 2026/27 academic year, after the trial has ended (subject to continued funding from the DfE).

What will the research involve for my child?

To see if the Mastering Number programme has helped improve pupils' learning and attainment in maths, **schools** will be asked to complete the following tasks:

- Securely share the full name, date of birth and Free School Meal (FSM) status of all children in Reception with NFER.
- Securely share the Unique Pupil Number (UPN) of the children from each Reception class selected by the evaluators to be involved in the assessments.
- Observe the selected children, and report on their early maths development in September 2025.
- Allow an NFER Researcher to complete a case-study visit (in a small number of schools). The visit will involve the researcher observing the Reception children working with the Mastering Number resources in intervention schools or with their usual maths sessions in control schools. They may take photos of the classroom equipment/provision (photos **will not** include children).
- Allow an NFER Test Administrator (trained and DBS-checked) to complete an age-appropriate maths assessment with the selected Reception children from the Lead Reception teacher's class in summer 2026.

NFER will also collect additional data about the selected pupils (from all Reception classes) from the DfE's National Pupil Database (NPD). This will include Early Years Foundation Stage Profile outcomes, Special Educational Needs (SEN) status, sex, absence rate and eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM).

The evaluation will end in summer 2026. Further information about the trial is available here: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/for-schools/participate-in-research/participate-in-research-projects/effectiveness-trial-of-mastering-number-2025-26/>

Are there any risks to my child if they take part?

We do not anticipate any risks or harm to the school, teachers or children participating in this study. NFER has safeguarding protocols in place to protect children during the research activities and schools will know what these procedures are.

How will NFER use and protect the data collected?

NFER has robust procedures in place to make sure that we comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which sets out how data can be collected and stored securely. We have summarised how we will collect, use, and protect personal data collected during this trial in the privacy notice available here: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/for-schools/participate-in-research/participate-in-research-projects/effectiveness-trial-of-mastering-number-2025-26/>

How will the findings be used?

The findings from this study will be published so that schools can read about it. NFER's independent research evaluation report will be published in May 2027, and will be available on the Education Endowment Foundation's website www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

No schools, teachers or children will be named in the report, and we will not include any other information that may mean someone else could identify them. No identifiable pupil data will be made public. The pupils' assessment scores will be shared with their school.

Pupils' assessment scores along with their background data will be pseudonymised¹ and added to the EEF archive to enable other research teams to conduct further research using this data.

What happens if I want to withdraw my child from the trial?

We hope that you consent to your child's participation in the trial, however if not, you may remove your child's data from being shared for use in the research at any time before data is linked with the National Pupil Database (summer 2026). To do so, please complete the 'Parent/Carer Withdrawal Form' below and return it to your child's school. The school will then ensure that your child's data is not shared as part of the trial.

Withdrawing your child from the trial will not impact your child's involvement in Mastering Number should the school be allocated to the intervention group, just their inclusion in the trial activities and data sharing. If you ask to withdraw your child's data once the trial has begun, we will use any data we have collected up to that point unless you ask us to delete it. Please let your child's class teacher know as soon as possible before the end of the summer term 2026, if you wish to withdraw your child for the trial activities. After this point we may not be able to remove your child's data from the analysis.

¹ Pseudonymisation is a technique that replaces or removes information (like names or other meaningful identifiers) in a dataset that identifies an individual.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact: masteringnumber@nfer.ac.uk

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Hurd
Evaluation and Survey Operations Lead
National Foundation for Educational Research

**Mastering Number at Reception and KS1 (Reception focus) trial 2025-26
Parent/Carer Withdrawal Form**

You only need to complete this form IF YOU DO NOT WISH your child's data to be shared, stored, and used for this research.

I **DO NOT** give permission for data about my child that is collected as part of the **Mastering Number at Reception and KS1 (Reception focus) trial 2025-26** to be shared, stored, or used for research purposes.

Your child's name.....Child's class:.....

Name of school.....

Your full name.....

Your telephone number (optional).....

Your signature..... Date.....