

# Using examples to teach grammar to Year 7 (Cognitive Science Teacher Choices Trial)

## School Information Sheet

### What is this Teacher Choices Trial?

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake a randomised controlled trial (RCT) as part of their 'Teacher Choices' programme. 'Teacher Choices' trials explore the everyday choices teachers make when planning lessons and supporting pupils. The aim of Teacher Choices research is to investigate the impact of these different day-to-day pedagogical practices on pupil learning and to generate evidence that can be readily applied by teachers in the classroom. This is a new and developing strand of EEF projects.

This 'Teacher Choices' project is about using cognitive science approaches in the classroom. Using worked examples is a teaching approach grounded in cognitive science, with a strong evidence base in maths and science education. English teachers commonly use examples and many are interested in using cognitive science in their teaching. This trial seeks to understand how cognitive science principles can support English teachers in using examples. It compares different ways to use examples to teach grammatical constructions to enhance writing in Year 7 English. The trial will compare three different approaches to using examples in short lesson segments in English classes to determine which one is most effective:

Approach	Description
<b>Systematic Worked Examples</b>	Structured use of worked examples, taught as a separate 'starter' twice a week. Pupils will learn to purposefully construct each grammar pattern using a sequence of steps.
<b>Responsive Worked Examples</b>	Responsive use of worked examples, with teachers integrating worked examples within their teaching sequence, based on curriculum and pupil needs. Pupils will learn to purposefully construct each grammar pattern using a sequence of steps.
<b>Non-worked Examples</b>	Structured use of non-worked examples, taught as a separate 'starter' twice a week. Pupils will learn to analyse examples to identify grammatical patterns and explore their effect on the reader.

Year 7 teachers and pupils in English departments in schools in England will take part. The trial will recruit from January 2024, and the approaches will be implemented in school during the summer term of 2024.

### Who is conducting the study?

The EEF has commissioned and funded this study. The NFER is conducting the evaluation and working in partnership with the University of Exeter, and with the University of Birkbeck and University College of London (UCL) through the Centre for Educational Neuroscience.

### What will the project involve for teachers, schools and pupils?

Year 7 teachers will be randomly allocated by NFER to one of the three approaches and asked to implement the approach for each of their Year 7 English classes. Teachers will be given a short teacher guide to enable them to implement the approach.

During the summer term 2024, Year 7 teachers will be expected to use examples to teach Year 7 grammar for ten weeks as follows:

- content: grammar patterns for expanding noun phrases in narrative description (5 weeks, April – May 2024), and grammar patterns for clauses/sentences in persuasive writing (5 weeks, June – July 2024).
- frequency: twice a week, with each session lasting 15 minutes.
- use of examples: in line with their randomly allocated approach (see ‘What is this Teacher Choices Trial project’ for details of each approach).

Schools will be asked to administer a bespoke writing test towards the end of the summer term to help assess which of the three approaches to teaching grammar is most effective. To support the analysis, there will also be a short grammar assessment halfway through the term, based on teaching up to that point. There will be no specific cost to schools for participating apart from staff time to support the trial. At the end of the trial, schools will receive a payment of £100 per participating teacher as a ‘Thank You’ for the time taken in being involved in the trial.

### Which schools and teachers can take part?

The trial will involve Year 7 teachers in English departments from 65 state-funded secondary schools. We would ideally like all Year 7 English teachers and classes in each school to participate (including where a teacher teaches more than one Year 7 English class). However, we appreciate the many burdens on schools and if you would like to participate with some but not all of your teachers please still get in touch.

In the trial, each participating teacher will be allocated to a single grammar teaching approach. Where classes are taught by more than one English teacher, we will check whether this allows teachers to be allocated to a single approach, and will contact you to discuss any classes where this is not possible.

To join the trial, the headteacher will sign up, with the head of English or another appropriate colleague being the main contact, and individual Year 7 English teachers will then take part. See ‘Joining the trial’ for further details.

### How will my school and teachers benefit from taking part?

The trial aims to provide evidence that will be useful for teachers, departments and schools when making decisions about their teaching. Your school’s participation will help to strengthen the evidence of the relationship of teachers’ choices to pupils’ attainment.

By participating in the trial, teachers will receive example texts to support the teaching of grammar patterns for writing, and written guidance to support your allocated teaching approach. Teachers will also receive the trial report which will describe how these different approaches related to pupil attainment. We hope these resources will be useful for guiding teaching in the future.

Schools that complete all the trial requirements will receive a payment of £100 per participating teacher.

### What will the evaluation involve for teachers and schools?

**Joining the trial:** At each school the headteacher will sign the online Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and nominate their head of English department or another appropriate colleague as the point of contact for the trial.

**Pupil and teacher data:** NFER will provide a template on the secure school portal for teachers to provide the data required for the trial. This will include Year 7 class lists for each teacher involved in the trial, information about ability groupings, teacher details, and UPN, name, date of birth for each pupil in the selected classes. The UPN provided will be used by NFER to collect the pupil's gender, Key Stage 2 (KS2) English attainment data, free-school meal (FSM) eligibility, and English as an Additional Language (EAL) status from the Department of Education's (DfE) National Pupil Database (NPD).

**Random allocation:** Teachers will be **randomly allocated** by the NFER to one of the three approaches to be used with each of their Year 7 classes twice per week for the first ten weeks of the summer term. This means that teachers in the same school may be asked to use different approaches. **It is very important that teachers do not switch approaches with another teacher in their school. This is to ensure that we can properly understand the impact of each approach.**

**Follow-up data:** Teachers will be asked to administer a bespoke English writing test, devised by NFER, to participating pupils towards the end of the summer term. Teachers will also be asked to undertake a short assessment (20-30 minutes) with their class halfway through the term, based on teaching up to that point, and to provide the results to NFER. **It is important to have assessment data for every participating pupil in the trial.** NFER will share the results from the assessments with each participating school.

**Evaluation materials:** All participating teachers will be asked to complete a short survey before the summer term and another survey at the end to give their perspective. Teachers will be expected to complete a brief online form each week on how frequently the approach was used in lessons.

Some teachers and heads of English departments will also be invited to take part in case studies where NFER researchers will visit the school to observe delivery of their assigned approach to inform contextual understanding. The visits will also gather views from teachers and pupils on the approaches being piloted and their experience of being part of the trial.

### When will my school need to get involved?

Date	School activities	NFER activities
January – February 2024	<p>Headteacher to sign-up to the trial via the MoU (the MoU will also request the key contact's name and contact details).</p> <p>Schools to share letters with parents of pupils in the relevant classes prior to sharing pupil data with NFER.</p> <p>School to share pupil names, date of birth and UPN for all participating pupils, as well as teacher details and information about ability groupings.</p>	<p>NFER to provide schools with a letter for parents that explains the research and gives them the opportunity to withdraw their child from the data collection for the study.</p> <p>NFER to provide a template to schools for providing teacher and pupil data.</p>



Date	School activities	NFER activities
March 2024	<p>Teachers to complete a short survey on their current classroom practice and on their confidence in teaching grammar.</p> <p>Participating English teachers to prepare lesson plans for the summer term using the guidance document according to their allocated approach.</p>	<p>NFER will send a short online survey link directly to participating teachers.</p> <p>NFER to randomise the approach to teaching grammar to each teacher and share the random allocation and provide the teachers' guide.</p> <p>NFER will approach schools via an email to find out whether they have any queries on the guidance document and approaches to teaching grammar.</p>
April – July 2024	<p>Teachers use examples to teach Year 7 grammar for ten weeks in the summer term as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content: grammar patterns for expanding noun phrases in narrative description (5 weeks, April – May 2024), and grammar patterns for clauses/sentences in persuasive writing (5 weeks, June – July 2024).</li> <li>• frequency: twice a week, with each session lasting 15 minutes.</li> <li>• use of examples: in line with their randomly allocated approach (see 'What is this Teacher Choices Trial project' for details of each approach).</li> </ul> <p>Teachers to complete a brief form every week about how frequently they have delivered the approach to teaching grammar.</p>	<p>NFER to support schools with the delivery of the approaches.</p>
May 2024	<p>Halfway through the term, classes complete a short grammar assessment (20-30 minutes) and send the test papers to NFER.</p>	<p>NFER will provide information to schools on how to access the short assessment.</p>
June - July 2024	<p>Schools to administer the bespoke English writing test (30-40 minutes) to participating pupils.</p> <p>Teachers to complete a short online survey on implementing the approach to teaching grammar.</p>	<p>NFER will provide the bespoke English writing test for each participating pupil.</p> <p>NFER will send a short online survey link directly to participating teachers.</p>
August 2024 – February 2025		<p>Trial data analysis and report writing undertaken by NFER.</p>
September 2024	<p>Payment of £100 per participating teacher made to all schools once the trial requirements are fulfilled.</p>	<p>NFER will provide the assessment scores to schools for all of the participating pupils.</p>

Date	School activities	NFER activities
March 2025	Schools will receive the summary report from the trial.	

### How will the findings be used?

All teachers involved will receive a summary of the trial findings and this will also be freely available on the NFER and the EEF websites.

### Who needs to give agreement for participation in the trial?

Schools will join the trial once their headteacher has signed the MoU. We will provide you with an information sheet to be passed on to your Year 7 English teachers.

We will provide schools with a letter for parents to inform them about the study and their child's participation. Schools should share the letter with parents/carers of the pupils in the participating Year 7 classes.

Note that in an RCT all pupil data is important. It would be really helpful if we could collect data about all relevant pupils taught by the teacher involved. The trial team really appreciate schools' and participants' support for the data collection.

### What happens if a school, teacher or pupil wants to withdraw from the trial?

A school or teacher can withdraw from the trial and/or from their data being used in the trial at any time until 1 September 2024, at which point the data will have been pseudonymised and analysed. Schools must notify the NFER of any teachers who withdraw from the study.

Similarly, parents can choose to withdraw their child from the data collection of the trial at any time until 1 September 2024. They can do this by returning the form on the bottom of the parent letter to their school. Schools must not provide data about children whose parents withdraw them from the data collection. If the withdrawal takes place after the study commences, schools must notify NFER of such pupils to be removed from datasets and subsequent analysis immediately.

### How will the NFER use and protect the data collected?

All data gathered during the trial will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, and GDPR and will be treated in the strictest confidence by the NFER.

No teacher or pupil-level data will be shared with the EEF.

**No school, teacher or pupil will be named in any report arising from this work.**

A School and Teacher Privacy Notice for the study is available [here](#).

A Parent/Carer Privacy Notice for the study is available [here](#).

### Who can I contact for more information?

If you want any further information, please contact Sarah Millar, the NFER Researcher at [teacherchoices@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:teacherchoices@nfer.ac.uk).